Articles on Cybermissions

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Missions in Cyberspace: The Strategic Front-Line Use of the Internet in Missions

Introduction

Frontier mission is always an adventure and a calling, in the words of William Carey, to "use means" for the completion of the Great Commission. One of these means is the use of the Internet. And one of the most exhilarating frontiers of mission today is cyber-missions; the frontline use of IT to evangelize and disciple the nations. In this article we will keep the focus on cross-cultural mission web sites and strategic approaches to ministry online such as web-evangelism, email discipleship, web-based TEE and icafes as a church-planting strategy. This paper will review the potential, the actual uses and the successful implementation of Internet-based missionary outreach and put the case for missionary societies to have an Internet evangelism department headed by a Field Director – Cyberspace. I have intentionally excluded the traditional uses of computing in missions or the use of the Internet for mono-cultural ministry as this has already been extensively reviewed elsewhere (for instance in the work of Leonard Sweet).

Some Statistics

Worldwide Internet Population:
445.9 million (eMarketer)
533 million (Computer Industry Almanac)

Projection for 2004:
709.1 million (eMarketer)
945 million (Computer Industry Almanac)

Online Language Populations (September 2002)
English 36.5%; Chinese 10.9%, Japanese 9.7%, Spanish 7.2%, German 6.7%, Korean 4.5%, Italian 3.8%, French 3.5%, Portuguese 3.0%, Russian 2.9%, Dutch 2.0%
(Source: Global Reach)

From the above statistics it is clear that the Internet is no longer predominantly an English speaking medium and that Asian languages such as Chinese, Japanese and Korean now occupy a significant portion of cyber-space along with major European languages such as Spanish., Portuguese and French.

There are over 275 million Internet searches each day and 80% of all Internet sessions begin at a search engine (Internetstatistics.com). Religion is one of the main topics people search for. Pew Internet surveys found that 28 million Americans get religion information online, that three million do so daily and that 25 % of net users search for religion-related topics. Barna Research estimates that up to 50 million Americans may worship solely over the Internet by 2010. There is every indication that the Internet is a major source of religious information where people of many cultures and languages collect their spiritual facts and opinions in private. Thus it's a place where missionaries must be.

Part One - The Concept, Opportunities And Strategic Use of Cyber-Missions

Despite the obvious potential for online evangelism mission computing is still largely seen as mission databases, accounting, fund-raising, email and publicity. Large "computing in missions" conferences debate security issues and networking but do not touch on how the IT staff can plant churches and reach unreached people groups for Jesus. That is left to "real missionaries"! This paper is about how geeks can spread the gospel and how cyber-missionaries can go places where conventional missionaries cannot. It will cover how the Internet is being used for theological education by extension, how chat rooms are being used for online evangelism in creative access countries, and how Internet cafes are proving a useful strategy in reaching unreached people groups. This paper presents the radical idea of IT as a frontline pioneer church-planting and evangelistic ministry.

Personal Involvement

My personal involvement with computers and mission began in 1988 with an ancient Microbee personal computer that did not even have a hard drive! By 1991 I had helped start Australian BibleNet, which was part of the old FidoNet bulletin board groups. In early 1994 as the web was just starting, I set up one of the first Christian websites "The Prayer Page", the first site to allow people to put their prayer points online and give lessons on how to pray. This eventually developed (in mid 1994) into Eternity Online Magazine, which ran until the end of 1998 when funding ceased. At its peak in 1997 Eternity Online Magazine had over one million readers and around five hundred people per year wrote in reporting they had found Christ through its pages. In late 2001 I took up the challenge of the Asian Internet Bible Institute (www.aibi.ph), which runs twelve free online courses including the 21 module Harvestime church-planting course, in an effort to equip (via icafes and church computers) the 70% of Asian pastors who have no formal ministry training. In combination with key missionaries I am currently also working on a strategy of planting internet cafes, staffed by Filipino missionaries, in unreached people groups in Asia.

The Word in Cyber-Space

Cyber-surfers mainly do just two things, read words and write words. Despite the graphics and sound bites of the WWW, the Internet is still mainly a text-based medium, and this is especially so in the developing world. But is this adequate? Can text transform the world? The answer is yes, people can be, and are often, changed by the written word addressing a real spiritual or personal need. The Internet simply places such material in an environment where people, who are interested in it, can easily access it through hyper-links and search engines. As I sleep or work, people read an article and are changed, or they go to the "How to Become a Christian" page and make a real commitment to Christ while sitting at their computer. They are transformed by the written word quite apart from my presence, appearance or charm. Thus cyber-ministry is far less dependent on personality, location, buildings, clothing or cultural cues than most missionary activity. Cyber-ministry however is highly dependent on writing and counseling skills, extensive networking between sites and on clarity and ease of use. The idea is to get the seeking person to the word that can transform their life (within three or four clicks of the mouse) and then to facilitate and follow up the encounter between the seeker and the Word of God and to build such people into encouraging online communities.

Understanding the WWW

Ok so you want to be a cyber-missionary? This requires a deep and intimate knowledge of the nature of cyberspace and particularly these four foundational concepts:

Firstly - the WWW is not a broadcast medium. When content is placed on the WWW it is not "sent out". The content stays where it is, on the computer it was put on and visitors arrive at that content via a vast web of interconnections. In fact the WWW can be private, semi-public or public. It is not like a radio station, that anyone can listen in on. Content can be restricted to people with passwords or put on obscure and unlisted pages that 'robots' and search engines are prevented from finding and web pages can even be encrypted. Thus the WWW is not designed to send out general information to a random audience, but to draw selected people to specific information. The difference is critical. There is no automatic audience. Unless you understand how to draw people through the network of links to your website you can end up with zero visitors.

Secondly, in drawing people to the gospel on the Internet it is essential to understand how people navigate their way to a web site. The WWW is actually most like a vast library and generally surfers do not visit web pages by accident any more than they take out a library book by accident. They mainly arrive at a web page on the basis of a relevant, particular and specific interest, via a search engine or a link from a related web page or an email. The Internet is not passive like listening to radio, rather the surfer is always active, clicking, searching, reading, browsing and intentionally navigating through cyber-space. Thus the web surfer is a self-directed seeker driven by curiosity traveling through a community of hyper-links. So you have somehow to be connected to where that person is now if they are ever to reach you. The idea is to position your website within one or two clicks of millions of people. You need to be part of the network, woven into cyberspace so people "bump into" links to your site in all sorts of places. You also must be able to offer them a reason to go to your page. Surfers are mainly in search of two things: human contact and relevant information. Curiosity and community are the driving forces of the WWW and cyber-ministries need to harness the power of these forces if they are to succeed.

Thirdly, the WWW was designed for scientists and military personnel to share data and is designed to share highly specific information with a widely dispersed audience. Thus, in a counter-intuitive way, the more specific your information, the more visitors your mission website will get! If your site is on a broad topic like "Christianity' or "the gospel" you will find that it is one among millions – and yours is number 34,218 in the search engine. So your site will get very few visitors. My most specific and unusual articles, such as articles on human cloning, Theophostic counseling, or blessings and curses attract more visitors than articles on general discipleship topics. You can also see this principle operating in the commercial websites. General shopping sites on the Internet have failed by the thousands - while rare booksellers; antique shops, vintage wine and art sales have flourished. The trick is to have up-to-date topics that are highly specific. So when Dolly the sheep was cloned – I immediately wrote a Christian view of human cloning. It was about the only Christian article on the topic (in cyberspace) that week and was a huge success. Thus, to draw people to a cyber-ministry it is important to build on your special knowledge and specific strengths. Forget about appealing to all, instead be relevant, be unique and be specific.

Fourthly, the WWW is more about relevance to needs than it is about image. Content is King. So have good content that meets real needs. People will come even to a really ugly website if it offers free software that they want. The key "click factor" that causes people to decide to follow

a link is the visitor's perception of the site's relevance to their immediate needs. Mainly these are relational and informational needs. Clicks are made "site unseen". Visitors have not seen your site when they click on a link to it. So your graphics don't matter a hoot. The decision (to click) is made, and can only be made, on the basis of information about the site's content – not its appearance. Thus "cool" is not as important as connection, content, and clarity. Yahoo is one of the largest Internet portals yet it is quite ordinary in its layout. Some of the most visited sites on the web are just plain text. However all successful web sites have great content, are fast, useful, clear and easy to use and navigate. Great websites "connect" with and meet the needs of their target audience. So an effective ministry web page is relevant, unique, clear, fast loading, useful, easily searched, interactive and full of highly specific information and resources that draw people in to use, re-use and explore the website.

The Internet in Creative Access Countries

A recent Chinese government decision to block access to Google shows that governments can and do censor the Internet and they generally block websites for political reasons. Governments generally seem to be less concerned about religious websites that are politically neutral. The AIBI has students in many creative access countries and there is no sign of interference so far. Though an Internet ministry will only reach a small percentage of people in creative access countries, these tend to be businessmen or leaders. These leaders can download training material that they can then share with others. This is what I call the "tunnel and blast" strategy in that you "tunnel into" a creative access country and find a person who is widely networked who then organizes others and the ministry spreads. While caution needs to be exercised it is quite possible to minister effectively even in countries like Myanmar which has severe restrictions on the Internet. It is important for websites hoping to minister in creative access countries to be politically neutral, culturally sensitive, free of damaging information and cautious about the image that is presented and the terms used. Also bandwidth needs to be conserved (as connections are frequently slow and sometimes people pay per MB for downloads and surfing) and the use of large graphics, sound or video needs to be carefully thought through. With these caveats the Internet is a great means of praying for, encouraging and training isolated Christian believers in creative access countries. The "how to" of this will unfold later in this paper.

Internet Evangelism in the Missions Context

Evangelism can effectively take place in chat rooms, by email, through friendship evangelism in email discussion groups, and through the gospel presented on web pages and in dozens of other online avenues. Tony Whittaker of web-evangelism.com has extensive resources and his web-evangelism guide can be found at http://www.aibi.ph/articles/webguide.htm. The use of anonymous or pseudonymous email addresses makes web evangelism possible even in creative access countries. Follow-up can be done by sending lessons through email and enabling converts to download a bible and discipleship resources. (see http://www.aibi.ph/articles/gospel1.htm). As with all evangelism, integrity is a must. "Spamming", aggressive pop-ups, and other approaches are unappreciated by most visitors and should not be part of web-evangelism. The unique thing about web-evangelism is how specific and focused it can be. Years ago I heard a statistic that, at any one moment in time, generally two-percent of any audience is at the point of conversion and ready to receive Jesus. I have found this true in my own evangelistic preaching and recently found that same two percent holds for Billy Graham crusades as well. Now two-percent of the Internet is a LOT of people. That means that on any given day ten million people online are at the point of conversion. By the strategic use of the self-selecting nature of Internet audiences you can reach just this "two-percent". By titling your page so that it only appeals to people who want to make a decision and making sure it comes

up well in the search engines you can communicate solely to those about to make a decision for Jesus. My evangelism page is simply called "How to Become a Christian" and targets those who want to become a Christian but don't know how. It is read by thousands of people each year who have typed "how to become a Christian" in a search engine and dozens give their life to Jesus (in 1997-98, 500 people a year made decisions for Christ on this simple web page). You can even target very specific groups e.g. with a web page in Hindi with a testimony and a specific title that will show up in the search engines and attract those on the point of conversion. The Internet has also begun to be much more supportive of non-English scripts such as Tamil, Japanese and Chinese. It is quite possible to be a full-time and very productive Internet-based personal evangelist working solely with "ready to convert" enquirers after the gospel!

The Internet as Missions Exposure

Do you want to safely expose some bible college students to dialogue with Muslim clerics? Give them an anonymous email address and let them loose on the sites run by Muslim apologists. Do you want to teach tact in witnessing? Put your students in chat rooms. Do you want a youth group to dig into the Scriptures? Set them the task of answering questions online and they will be forced into doing the research for the answers. On the Internet missions candidates and bible college students can be involved with people from all cultures and belief systems and get exposure to both the friendly and the hostile with little risk of actual physical harm and in an environment where the mistakes won't ruin the ministry. Like all forms of mission exposure it needs to be supervised by an experienced missionary and planned in advance. It can also be integrated into traditional mission exposure trips as part of the preparation before arriving in the foreign country.

Study Cells, Email Groups and Online Communities of Interest

One of the great challenges of cyber-ministry is to bring people out of individual isolation into online groups and eventually into face-to-face communities of faith. Students at the Asian Internet Bible Institute are encouraged to find other students in their area and to form study cells discussing the material together and praying for each other. Generally one individual will be the facilitator and motivator in gathering the others together. Communities can be intentionally formed through online discussion such as YahooGroups. Such discussion groups can be used for a wide variety of purposes such as theological discussion, personal sharing and prayer points, a discipleship group, online classrooms, coordinating a geographically dispersed project or team, sharing information among churches in a local area, community organizing around a cause, policy formation, etc. Most successful online communities have between 40 members and 600 members. Below 40 members discussion tends to be occasional. Beyond 600 members the traffic is so large that people start unsubscribing. Good communities are managed by "moderators" who are tactful and wise and know how to start, guide and terminate discussions. There are many testimonies to how such online discussion groups have proved an enormous source of support and encouragement to isolated missionaries, lonely clergy and busy believers. [Technical notes: By using CGI and Perl scripts it is quite easy to set up guestbooks, chat rooms, discussion boards. Reliable secure scripts can be found at: http://nms-cgi.sourceforge.net. The latest community trend is the weblog commonly known as "Blogs" see www.blogger.com. If you really get into blogs you can Use Movable Type for a dynamic weblog experience. For larger communities Xoops (xoops.org) is a free, easy to install PHP/MySQL web portal system that has proved very useful for the AIBI Student Center).]

Online TEE and Pastor Training

Theological education by extension has been around for many years in the missions context, in correspondence schools like ICI and through missionary radio follow-up from FEBC and HJCB. The logical next step is to create online bible colleges. This is what I am doing with the Asian Internet Bible Institute (www.aibi.ph). The proliferation of Internet cafes in the developing nations means that web-based training is now accessible by pastors in practically every small town in Asia, without them having to own a computer. Compressing study material into zip files and ebooks can minimize the cost of using icafes. This enables a 300-page training module to be downloaded in five minutes or less. Study materials can be printed out in the icafe or just read offline on the computer screen. The AIBI produces a CD of the materials as well as distributing them online. AIBI students seem to fall into a number of categories: pastors in remote areas who cannot access conventional forms of training, small denominations needing a low-cost training option they can easily implement, busy Christians who want to study at their own pace and time and who are comfortable with the Internet and bible students using AIBI material to supplement their studies. Another category is also emerging, Christians who simply don't want to fight the traffic in Manila for two hours to get to a conventional classroom! This is an increasing reality in Asia's mega-cities. Cyber-learning is still relatively new and many are cautious or fearful of the technology but it has the potential to provide a low-cost and very practical educational alternative for Christians, particularly in developing nations. The challenges of web-based TEE are student management, databases, and making effective use of online classrooms. Good database programmers, and a web-savvy Christian educator are the essential parts of the team.

Networking Missions Specialists

Missions specialists and project teams can be coordinated using email lists, discussion groups, groupware and web-portal software. For example a linguist in Pakistan can co-ordinate with a printer in Hong Kong and a funding church in the USA to produce a gospel tract in a tribal language. Discussions can be held among dispersed members of a team with each member receiving a copy of the emails that fly back and forth, so that highly specialized personnel can consult on numerous projects without leaving home. These technologies can be made secure through strict membership criteria and in some cases, by encryption of emails. I have used these technologies to coordinate prayer cover and to facilitate partnerships such as in the evangelization of a certain UPG. Task groups can be coordinated by using an online calendar with project events and deadlines. [Technical note: If you don't like CGI calendar scripts try using www.calendars.net. TUTOS at www.sourceforge.net is a good free groupware package.] Email groups are particularly useful when they are focused on a specific topic e.g. "missionary member care" or a specific project, "reaching the XYZ tribe". Successful lists have a very clear purpose, are factual and concise and have a positive tone, which is set by a committed team coordinator. In addition to email groups there are numerous networking and resource sites for missions that can be of enormous help in finding partners, information, and even funding for initiatives. *Brigada* is perhaps the best known of these (http://www.brigada.org) and a helpful list of mission links can be found at: http://www.aibi.ph/articles/misslinks.htm

Online Mentoring, Counseling And Discipleship

The power of IT to connect people with common interests assists in mentoring missionaries and pastors and in online counseling and discipleship. A young missionary in a remote area can develop an email mentoring friendship with a more senior missionary, which can be a significant boost to the pastoral care of that missionary. Online leadership development has been attempted by organizations such as mentorlink.org amongst others. My observation is that in

cyber-space more informal mentoring takes place, than formal structured mentoring, and mentoring tends to emerge out of a rapport that develops between two people online and then this extends into a deeper and more structured relationship.

Online counseling and discipleship has been a controversial issue with some saying it should not even be attempted. Proponents of brief therapy, solution-focused therapy and cognitive therapy seem to be open to the possibilities; while more talk-intensive psychotherapies remain generally opposed to online counseling. Various New Age therapies, personal coaching and motivational seminar speakers have adopted the Internet, even offering individual spiritual mentoring online. One coaching and training email list has over 1700 members. Career counseling has made extensive use of computers and online testing and counseling and is probably the most computerized segment of the counseling profession. Myers-Briggs and other personality tests can be administered online and thus staff selection procedures can be streamlined.

In the missions context a missionary can raise a personal issue with the mission counselor and get some online advice, and then, if needed, arrange for a visit to or from the counselor. Thus email access to competent counselors can help a missionary to deal with issues and irritations without accumulating the stress until a face-to-face meeting at the next staff conference. This is very valuable in and of itself. The mentoring functions can be used in leadership development programs, pastoral training and in discipling new converts in creative access countries. Cyber-counseling is not a full replacement for face-to-face counseling but in many situations it will be a much welcome relief and better than no counseling or support at all.

Christian Community Internet Cafes

The community Internet café is gaining acceptance as a mission strategy and a form of holistic development ministry in bridging the digital divide. Andrew Sears of AC4 and Dr. Josias Conradie of WIN International are known as innovators in this area. The Association of Christian Community Computer Centers (http://www.ac4.org) is an organization founded to assist in the use of icafes by churches and missions, among others. In missions, icafes have been used as outreaches and teaching centers with considerable success in creative access countries where they provide community Internet access and teach English and various computer courses. This strategy seems to work best in small to mid-sized urban communities in remote areas where there are enough people to keep the icafe busy and yet where the icafe is still novel enough to be a welcome addition to their infrastructure.

I am attempting to take this one step further and use icafes as a self-funding sending strategy for teams of Asian missionaries going into Asian UPG's. An Internet café of twenty computers can support between 4-6 Asian missionaries at an acceptable living standard for their area of ministry ($200 a month). Donated second-hand computers will be used to set up three such icafes initially with a further 27 icafes envisaged over a five year period, Lord willing and providing. The icafe provides a point of community contact, a venue for web-based distance education and income for the team (as in Asia support levels from traditional sources are often inconsistent). All members of the team are expected to be computer-literate but only one will be an actual IT specialist looking after the computers. The others will be church planters, community workers and educators. This requires team based, on-field decision-making structures which will be outlined later in this paper. Further information can be obtained by emailing johned@aibi.ph .

Other Applications

There are numerous other applications being explored. These include distributing Palm PC's, loaded with development and educational material to remote communities (p3internet.org), justice and community organizing via email, mercy ministries and relief efforts coordinated through a web-site, computer distribution to bridge the digital divide, online church consulting and so forth. The fertile imaginations of mission-minded Great Commission Christians are finding innumerable ways to minister to the nations using computers.

Part Two - Moving Into Cyber-Missions

What then should a missionary society do to take advantage of the strategic opportunities and low-cost advantages of cyber-ministry? This next section is how I think cyber-missions can best be implemented within the operating procedures of a contemporary missionary society.

Integrating Cyber-Missions With Conventional Missions

Cyber-mission works best when it is in active synergy with more conventional forms of mission. For instance, a convert via web evangelism can be referred to a church in his or her area, or a student at the AIBI may want to articulate into a local bible college. Taking care of these transition points is a critical part of the task of the cyber-missionary.

The best way this synergy can happen is if cyber-ministries are a department of a larger mission and are headed by a Field Director-Cyberspace. Since the Internet has its own unique working conditions, sub-culture and approach to ministry it should be considered as a separate field for front-line ministry. It is granted that it is possible that cyber-missionaries could simply be incorporated into existing teams. A team reaching Thailand could contain a cyber-missionary doing web-evangelism in Thai. But this would probably lead to much unnecessary duplication with each field area setting up its own computers and cyber-outreach. Thus cyber-mission is probably best organized as a separate department within the mission, but with extensive links to all the more traditional fields.

Cyber-ministry also defies traditional boundaries and definitions of whose field is whose. An evangelistic website may deal with people from Kenya, Myanmar and Brazil all on the same day. Except for websites in a particular local language, it is almost impossible to geographically confine such a ministry. Hyperlinks create partners, and alliances are formed on the Internet that would seldom exist on the field. Thus the Cyber-Missions Department will be the "fuzzy boundary" of the organization and the place where many of its possible linkages to other churches and missions may well first develop.

A Cyber-Missions department does not just need computer technicians. It also needs passionate evangelists, careful bible teachers and sensitive prayer warriors. The Internet is simply a medium for the expression of all the gifts of the Spirit not a "gift" itself. That said, the WWW is a unique ministry space with a unique sub-culture and conditions of service. Cyber-missionaries need a definite calling and the ability to sit in front of a computer eight hours a day, three hundred days a year. Cyber-ministry looks easy at first but few people last more than three months in "full-time service" online. The requirements on human concentration and patience are immense and discouragements and weariness abound. Results rarely come as quickly as initially expected and people occasionally disparage cyber-ministry saying, "you aren't a real missionary, you just play with computers". The online environment can be emotionally hostile, and there are technical breakdowns. In fact it is just like any other form of missionary service! I advise cyber-missionaries to have some face-to-face ministry as well, as

the lack of warm human contact can also be a very draining part of the challenge, especially for extroverts.

A Cyber-Missions team should contain, or have access to, a computer technician and a database programmer. Most of the other staff should be computer literate ministry personnel whose primary calling is non-technical (evangelism, teaching, mercy). The Cyber-Missions Team should have its own goals, budget, vision statement, and planning and be semi-autonomous. Where possible it should have its own physical space and be sufficiently separate so it is not invaded by other staff wanting their computers repaired. I spend a lot of time saying to people "No, I don't fix computers" and this needs almost to be a sign outside the door! Cyber-mission **should not** be set up as part of the administration department handling donor databases etc. While administration and cyber-mission both use computers they have little else in common and are very different in ethos and vision. Ministry in cyberspace needs its own space and recognition as a pioneer frontline ministry. Staff should be selected carefully and should be biblically trained pioneer missionaries and have at least two years of extensive experience with the Internet.

A note of caution: There is some danger in the Cyber-Missions department being portrayed as the "glamour team". Firstly, glamour tends to attract people who are there for the image, and who leave after a few months when reality sets in. Secondly, it will tend to develop jealousies among other mission staff, who may believe that money spent on technology is wasted. This tension can be minimized by getting donated equipment (and letting people know it's donated) and also by giving cyber-missions the flavor of a vigorous pioneer ministry with a spiritual and evangelistic emphasis that serves the real needs of the field.
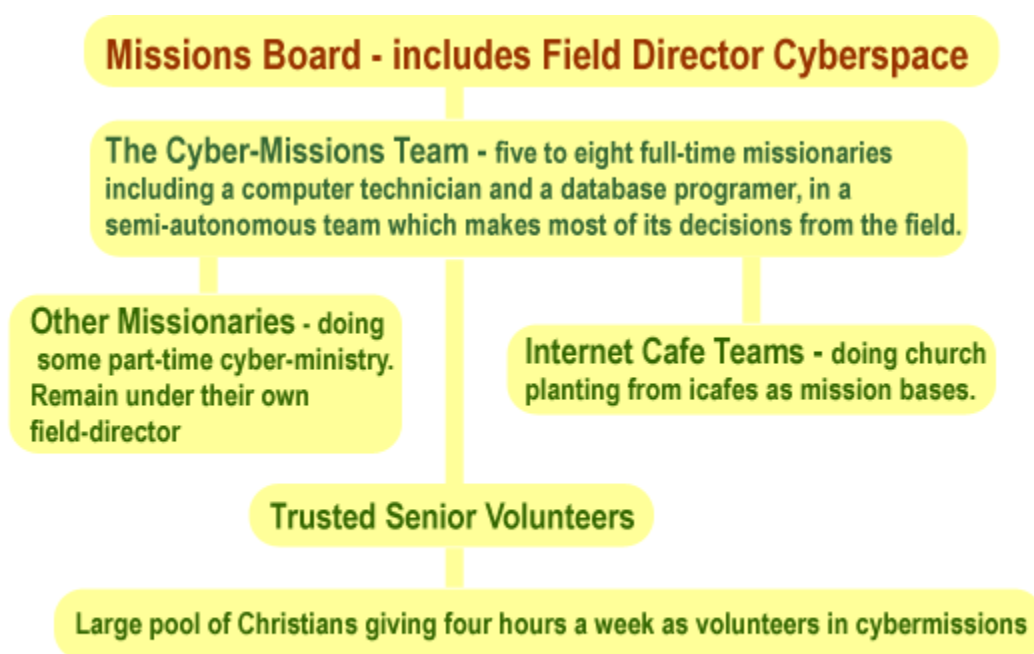
What about the alternative of making the entire mission a cyber-mission? At the moment there are certain disadvantages to this especially in applying for funding and in recognition among peers as cyber-mission has not yet been validated and accepted. I think cyber-missions are best nurtured inside conventional missionary societies for another five years or so before cyber-missionary societies are formed on a wider scale. Specialist cyber-missions can be set up just like there are specialist radio ministries and specialist tract distribution societies. It is a valid way forward. However anyone setting up such a mission should be passionate about networking the ministry into other efforts in the Kingdom or much of its effectiveness will be lost.

Implication For Mission Structures

The connected, egalitarian, self-navigating world of the WWW creates a culture that is highly independent, so most cyber-missionaries will not fit easily into a traditional missions bureaucracy. On the other hand, cyber-missions is technical, somewhat fixed in a physical place where the computers are, and demands continuous steady daily application to the task. You can spend a day looking for a missing comma in a script that runs the website. Cyber-mission is a free wheeling pizza and coffee world that keeps strange hours, but it is also a technical and precise world. It is too unconventional for the administrative types and too nerdy for the gung-ho radicals and thus falls somewhere between the two main types of mission structures today.

Good cyber-missionaries tend to be highly independent, focused, disciplined, intelligent, technically minded and sometimes quite nerdy. They tend to be the NT type category of the Myers-Briggs test – particularly the INTJs. They have their own wavelength and when this is respected, by giving them freedom and acknowledging their unique gifts and needs, they can be built into exciting and highly productive teams.

Because of the current popularity of the Internet there is the possibility for a structure involving hundreds of volunteers coordinated by a central team of permanent staff. The central staff team would strategize and direct the cyber-ministry as a core group, other missionaries in the same mission who were interested could do "some Internet ministry" and perhaps lead a bible class online, and a large team of volunteers could do web graphics, man chat rooms, help with translation and answer enquiry emails, forwarding more complex matters to mission staff. I envisage a Cyber-Missions Department looking a bit like the following flow-chart:

Missions Board - includes Field Director Cyberspace

The Cyber-Missions Team - five to eight full-time missionaries including a computer technician and a database programer, in a semi-autonomous team which makes most of its decisions from the field.

Other Missionaries - doing some part-time cyber-ministry. Remain under their own field-director

Internet Cafe Teams - doing church planting from icafes as mission bases.

Trusted Senior Volunteers

Large pool of Christians giving four hours a week as volunteers in cybermissions

The above structure is also well adapted to the Two-Thirds World context and the sending of national missionaries. Here in Asia missionary applicants sometimes find themselves alienated by the traditional selection process, with its devastating possibility of personal rejection. With a large pool of volunteers the cyber-missions team can operate by invitation, rather than by "selection". Volunteers who prove their mettle would be invited to further responsibility and finally onto full-time staff as colleagues in the ministry. Operating by invitation is more relational and accepting and generally more suited to the Asian context. Thus the ideal structure for a cyber-missions department would be a semi-autonomous team, consisting of full-time staff, part-time contributors and numerous volunteers, and operating by invitation on a relational basis, with its own budget, vision statement and planning. But who should lead such an enterprise?

The Field Director – Cyberspace

The Field Director – Cyberspace should be a mature missionary with high-level leadership and networking skills and a good technical and theological background. He or she should be able to keep the team together and focused on the task, not lost in making minor technological improvements or absorbed in online theological disputes. He or she would also be a champion for cyber-ministry in the organization. The Field Director-Cyberspace has to have a detailed on-the-ground awareness of conditions in the area of ministry and the needs of the local churches.

This enables the most relevant and useful online materials to be developed ensuring that the Cyber-Missions department is a servant of the national church.

This requirement for local knowledge means that an ideal location for a cyber-mission would be in Singapore or a similarly well-wired city in Asia. In such a location field conditions and local culture are more immediately obvious. If the team were located in the USA, with easy broadband access, first-world assumptions and a culture of having to acquire the latest technology, there would tend to be pressure to be a high-end, high-band-width ministry that would gradually become alienated from the reality of conditions on the field and the technological challenges of the recipients.

It is not absolutely necessary for the Field Director-Cyberspace to have a computing degree, as that is more the province of the technical staff. First and foremost, the Field Director-Cyberspace must be a visionary with a huge missionary heart and the ability to manage, delegate to, and receive advice from field missionaries and IT experts.

Finally, the Field Director needs to be focused on the church, and on the unreached, not on the Internet. The people visiting the website have a face and a culture and are Tibetans or Sikhs or Malay Muslims and it is these people who are the object of the ministry – not the technology. The Field Director needs to see the role as not just running a computer department – but being a pioneer missionary to unreached people groups.

Conclusion

Cyber-mission is going to happen. In fact it has begun to happen in the far-flung corners and on the innovative edges of mission. The mustard-seed has been planted. How then can it grow best? I would like to see a consultation held among missions on how to best structure, fund, plan and implement cyber-missions as a form of front-line pioneer ministry. Out of that conference I would like the major missions to set up cyber-missions departments, linked and networked to each other with high-levels of external and internal cooperation. Also specialist cyber-missions should be set up and take their place along with the other specialist missionary societies and hopefully in cooperation with other church and mission agencies. Cyber-missions is an adventure, and like all real adventure it has an uncertain outcome, and lots of risks, challenges and question marks. But the Internet is a great way to share the gospel, is incredibly effective and astonishingly inexpensive. Cyber-mission is complex, but it can be done and is being done successfully. Cyber-mission delivers results, and it can deliver those results in places where we cannot get any by conventional means. To use a saying from solution-focused brief therapy: "If it works – do more of it! ".

Biographical

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How Internet Evangelism and Cybermissions will affect the Way We Do Missions in the 21st Century

Introduction

William Carey wrote his famous tract about the need to "use means" for the fulfillment of the Great Commission, one such means in the 21st century is information technology. The changes in this area are so rapid and so profound that major thinkers such as Ray Kurzweil and Francis Fukuyama are saying that we stand at the verge of a major change in human nature, as vast increases in processing power propel us into a world of artificial intelligence, and a "post-human future" where many people are cyborgs with computers inputting directly into their brains or with body parts augmented by computer chips and other technological aids. The rate of change is so great that it is predicted that by 2013 a super-computer will have achieved a human level of intelligence, by 2023 that such a computer will cost only $1000 and that by 2049 there will be a $1000 computer with the processing power of the *entire human race (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljbI-363A2Q).*

This is due to Moore's Law, named after computer scientist Gordon Moore who said that computing power / processing power will double about every eighteen months. Moore's Law has held true for over fifty years as technologies have changed from valves, to transistors to printed circuit boards and now to dual core and multiple core processors. There is no sign that Moore's Law is coming to an end and in fact processing power per $1000 is doubling every year or so (which is even faster than Moore's Law predicted).

Missionary work is going to be profoundly changed by this (and is being changed even as I write). The Internet has become one of the main places that people ask their spiritual questions and is the natural place people go to seek private and personal information (such as medical, financial, sexual and spiritual information). With the use of hand-held devices such as PDA's, cellphones and Ipods the possibility for distribution of the gospel has become immense. The 3 billion mark for cellphone subscribers was passed on July 1, 2007, by the year's end it is expected to be 3.4 billion plus. The 1.1 billion regular Internet users of today is expected to reach 3.3 billion by 2010 (just three years) as cellphone use spreads and people access the web, email and music online using their cellphones and not just their personal computers. In 2010 a single Christian website, optimized for cellphone use, will potentially be able to reach over half the world's population. The missionary on a bicycle could become the missionary on the computer.

The rise in the use of English and of the top ten trade languages means that 81% of Internet communication is in just ten main languages: English, Chinese, Spanish, Japanese, German, French, Portuguese, Korean, Italian and Arabic (http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm). Other major world languages include Hindi/Urdu, Bengali, Russian, Punjabi, Javanese, Vietnamese, Telugu, Marathi, Tamil, Turkish, Persian, Gujarati, Polish, Ukranian, Malayalam, Kannada, Oriya, Burmese, Thai, Tagalog, and Swahili. The improvement in handling non-English scripts and in translation software will make it relatively easy for a single missions agency to communicate the gospel on a one-to-one basis with the vast majority of the world's population. This is also being driven by the demands of trade and the human need to inter-connect. The rush to learn English means that China will be the world's largest English-speaking country in the fairly near future (2010 – 2015) though many may not speak it that well!

India has a long history of the use of the English language and will also be accessible to English based attempts to communicate the gospel in cyberspace.

The vast increase in available bandwidth has made audio podcasts and video clips (as in www.youtube.com) part of the gospel armory. By 2010 (or before) we will be streaming full length movies to millions of the unreached. By 2015, at the latest, a camel driver in the remotest part of Uzbekistan will be able to open up a personal hand-held device, view the Jesus film, send in a response, and get an answer to his spiritual questions, in the Uzbek language, in seconds. In fact I am part of a Silicon Valley based group of Christians working on such a system at the moment. And this response can be to a text message, phone call, email, letter or fax – multiple methods of input and output will be available. The Bible, the plan of salvation, the basics of the Christian life, and standard theological works will be universally available in digital form. With improvements in printing technology and e-paper they will also be universally available in print.

Many people will seek their religious information online, make their decisions for Christ online and be followed up online. Some will baptize themselves (as happened with Muslim background believers), others will join cyber-churches, some will join online and offline bible studies, or worship in small groups with their families. For billions of folk the cellphone or PDA will be their main means of finding out about God.

In this emerging information age the power of databases has become immense. A friend of mine who lives in England went to shop online for the first time at Tesco (a major supermarket chain where he normally bought his groceries). After logging in on this first occasion "Peter" was presented with a tab called My Favorites. When he clicked on it he did not find it empty - instead found a complete list of all the things he normally bought at the store. Tesco had tracked his every purchase for years and so they knew what he wanted and when he would want it and had arranged his "favorites" for him as soon as he generated an online account. The power of databases means that missions agencies will be able to track millions of individual Christian enquirers and precisely meet their needs for spiritual information.

The job of the missionary will necessarily move from proclaimer / communicator mentor/discipler as the purely informational needs are being increasingly met by the Internet. Information is only part of the equation of spiritual growth. Prayer, encouragement, and the impartation of anointing and power in ministry come through loving, interested relationships. The missionary of the future will be both high tech and high touch. I am not saying that there is no validity in the "missionary on a bicycle" approach, just that new means of communicating the gospel have become available and that this new means are powerful even beyond our wildest imaginations. According to my sources in Muslim ministry more Muslims are coming to Christ online than by any other method, and Campus Crusade predicts that by 2010 Internet evangelism will be responsible for the majority of its indicated decisions for Christ. The use of video and audio will mean that even non-literate or semi-literate people may now be able to hear the gospel in cyberspace, via their cellphones.

Why 21st Century Mission Agencies Need To Adopt Technology

The primary reason that 21st century mission agencies need to adopt technology is ***because the people they are trying to reach will have adopted technology and it will be their (the target group's) primary form of communication.*** As Prensky says (Prensky: 2001) people born after 1985 or so are 'digital natives' who naturally communicate with other via technology. When they talk to someone it is on a cellphone. When they watch someone it is on YouTube.

When they write someone it is a text message or instant message (even email is now "old hat"). A large portion of their communication is technology-mediated communication, and with the inclusion of powerful processors on cellphones this communication is becoming computer-mediated communication or CMC. For digital natives a video game is part of the real world and having a presence in a multi-player role-playing community such as Second Life is perfectly natural. This is particularly true in some parts of Asia.

As John Naughton from the Observer wrote:

Just to put that in perspective, today's 21-year-olds were born in 1985. The internet was two years old in January that year, the same year as Nintendo launched 'Super Mario Brothers', the first blockbuster game. When these young people were going to primary school in 1990, Tim Berners-Lee was busy inventing the World Wide Web. The Palm Pilot was launched in 1996, when they were heading for secondary school. Around that time, pay-as-you-go mobile phone tariffs arrived, enabling teenagers to have phones. Napster and Blogger.com launched in 1999, just when they were doing GCSEs. The iPod and the early social networking services appeared in 2002, when they were doing A-levels. Skype launched in 2003, just as they were heading for university, and YouTube launched in 2005, as they were heading towards graduation.

Sure there are still 49% of people who 'only occasionally' use communications technology and prefer watching TV instead. For them technology is 'just too complicated' and they just want to push a button and see a movie. Yet in soon foreseeable future their wide-screen TV is going to be connected to the Internet and made interactive. They may not become content producers, but they will become content consumers and so the Internet will eventually reach everyone. The people who we want to share the gospel with, will be connected to the Internet and be using it either actively or passively, as a communications device. So if you want to reach "Fred Smith" - he is going to be online in some way or form (computer, phone, personal communication device, Internet enabled TV etc). In 2001 in the Philippines I tried to strike up a conversation with some college-aged nieces and nephews. But they were 'just too busy' – they were texting each other and they were all in the same room! One young lady was even texting her sister who was standing right next to her! The room was silent except for the clicking of keypads. 'Texting' was mediating speech even under normal circumstances! They were 'technology natives' and for them the most natural form of communication involves the use of technology. For many people actual 'face-to-face' conversation is seen as socially difficult. Now one cannot extrapolate too far from this one personal incident but it is illustrative of what many observers of socio-technological trends are saying.

The corollary is also that if you get on a bicycle and go down Main Street with a bunch of tracts hardly anyone will talk to you. Indeed in most developed countries it is no longer socially acceptable to knock on doors with a tract, or to take a bullhorn and preach outside the local cinema. The lost generally do not want to be personally approached by a zealous evangelist. Even inviting folk to a high quality Christian rock concert has its limitations, and very few will ever walk into a church! (And if they do no one talks to them). The lost are now increasingly immune to traditional forms of evangelism. The old means of missionary communication are effectively reaching less and less people, while the new media are becoming the sole means by which people receive communication that they deem to be credible. To get the message of the gospel into the world of the unsaved you will have to get into their computer, their cellphone, or their iPod – in other words you will have to engage in Internet Evangelism and Cybermissions!

So the main reason why missions agencies MUST develop an understanding of cyberspace is that the Internet and the devices connected to it will ***soon become the dominant means of personal communication on planet Earth.*** It is imperative that we grasp this.

Other Reasons

1. *Lower cost* – cost per online decision for Christ is generally less than $5 per decision for Christ and often less than $1 per decision for Christ (this is based in my own experience and that of campus Crusade and other members of the Internet Evangelism Coalition). There is also a far lower barrier to entry and cost of entry and many of the main software tools are free or inexpensive and web hosting itself (at sites such as Dreamhost and 1and1.com) is now almost ridiculously cheap.

2. *Lower Risk* – this is especially true when it comes to reaching Muslims and other groups that are hostile to the gospel. While online ministry is not perfectly secure it is still more secure than almost any other kind of ministry.

3. *Wide geographical reach* – the Internet is not restricted to a local area (such as a church), broadcast radius (such as radio, TV), or a satellite footprint. In fact for a few dollars a month a missionary can minister in dozens, if not hundreds of countries.

4. *Both one-to-many and one-to-one* – Cyberspace enable both one-to-many communication such as a web page, video clip or podcast, and one-to-one communication such as chat, email, and instant messaging, and can also freely move between these. For instance a one-to-many web page can have an one-to-one email response form. Thus the gospel can be proclaimed in a one-to-many format and get individual one-to-one responses which can be properly followed up.

5. *Multiple formats* – other media are limited to one format, radio to audio, TV to video, print publication to text and graphics and so on. The Internet allows the missionary to use all media types – audio, video, text, graphics, animation, games , interactive forums, role playing games, imaginary worlds and so forth. The Internet can also connect with other communication devices such as telephone (via VOIP), SMS (online free SMS services), and fax (online fax sending and receiving services). So an Internet ministry has a much wider spectrum of means available to it with which to communicate Christ.

6. *Can reach entire language groups* – the Internet is post-geographical - where you are does not matter – only the language you are communicating in matters. A Spanish speaking evangelist can thus touch lives in Spain, the USA, Peru, Ecuador and so forth simultaneously. In fact our courses in Spanish are in a dozen countries and are co-ordinated by an Argentinian living in Townsville, Australia!

7. *Asynchronous communication* - the Internet is always 'on' - a YouTube video can be viewed at any time of day – not just on a certain TV channel at a certain time. Email can be read at the person's convenience. A conversation can take place on a bulletin board among different people in different time zones posting at hours that suit them. Communication does not have to be synchronous – radio programs, TV programs , face to face communication, and telephone calls require us to be 'in-sync' with each other. The Internet removes this requirement. A missionary can post an article on a website one day and go to sleep – while it is then read elsewhere by people at the time of their choice.

8. *Archived communication* – the Internet archives and preserves communication. Articles I wrote in 1995 are still being read and replied to today. This is unlike radio and TV programs which are generally not accessible after transmission. It is even better than most magazines and newspapers as few of these have their articles read ten years later. Thus a sermon that is preached in 2007 and is then uploaded to the Internet could still be touching lives in 2027.

9. *The power of collaborative networks of volunteers* – Major websites such as Wikipedia are run by large collaborative networks of volunteer contributors. This model can unleash the gifts of Christians who can go online and share Christ, teach Scriptures and so forth. In a large church only a very small percentage may get to 'do anything spiritual' but online nearly everyone can use their spiritual gift to some extent. Intercessors can pray for prayer points sent in, teachers can upload bible studies and teach online classes, evangelists can go into chat rooms and share Christ, and they can do this from home, in their spare time and be a blessing as part of a network of volunteers on a Christian website. Missions agencies can use their retired missionaries who know the language and culture (and are perhaps back home for medical reasons) as coordinators so one missionary has a team of say 20 volunteers who work on sharing Christ with a particular UPG.

10. *The power of peer to peer ministry* - the Internet allows peer to peer ministry with enquirers or believers grouped into online discussion groups, bulletin boards, egroups and chat rooms. This takes a lot of the pressure off the missionary who can act as a facilitator for believers who may be scattered over a wide geographical area. The believers share their questions, answers and prayer points with each other. This is particularly effective with young people.

11. *The power of building knowledge in community for strategic purposes* – the Internet allows geographically dispersed experts to share knowledge and contribute to a strategic missions project. This gains leverage and allows good projects to be done more efficiently.

12. *Seeker driven* - the Internet is an ideal medium for people with questions as search engines such as Google make it easy for users to find highly specific information in answer to a query. A religion seeker cannot expect to get a timely answer to his or her specific personal question from a print publication, or radio or TV station but they can find an answer, in a few seconds or so, online. When people want information about sensitive issues such as health, sexuality, religion and politics they turn to the Internet. Religion seekers tend to go online as part of their searching process and we should be there to interact with them. Therefore the Internet is the medium of choice for seekers with questions and we should be online to help them.

13. *Ability to target particular niches* – as the Internet becomes far more sophisticated it has become possible to target people in specific areas (by zip code) with Google advertisements (for your church, your outreach or your website) or to design websites that target a particular demographic (e.g. Portuguese speaking 14-18 year olds, or German speaking seniors) and then to promote it with great accuracy to that group. This means that highly relevant gospel messages can be sent to those most likely to be interested in them.

14. *Tunnel and blast* – in countries with little Internet infrastructure the Internet can reach a handful of believers, who can then print out the material and share it with their friends locally. This tactic is being used to set up bible colleges in churches and prisons, with the curriculum being downloaded from the Internet and then shared locally. Several tract ministries are also putting their tracts online in numerous languages so they can be downloaded by pastors and shared in that church's community. This ability to get quality print materials to people, for almost zero cost cannot be matched by radio, TV or other methods. It can also be used to

distribute audio and video.

15. *The ability to explain complex concepts* – The Internet was originally designed for the impartation of scientific and defense information and this is still what it does best. The web can present complex text, graphics, charts and videos to explain a medical procedure, a science experiment, and data from outer space. It can also help explain complex theological problems and illustrate optimal techniques in church planting, holistic ministry, and aid and development. It is an ideal training medium and online theological training is now blossoming. Because the Internet has inexpensive feedback and collaborative possibilities it can enhance a purely informational presentation (such as a sermon, book, tape or DVD) with live online discussion. It has become commonplace for TV programs to say 'for further information see our website'. The website allows a much more in-depth look at the idea presented on the TV program. So churches, missionaries and pastors can refer during the sermon, to information presented online and thus develop concepts such as the Trinity, eschatology or ontology that may not be able to explained easily from the pulpit or even face to face.

16. *Non-profit giving is increasingly online* – even US presidential hopefuls are finding out that online donations and Paypal are now a major part of their funding strategy. In fact many nonprofits such as World Vision receive a large portion of their funding from massive online responses to crisis situations such as the Asian tsunami. Missions agencies, which are finding it more and more difficult to get into churches, may find online giving by individual Christians to be a major source of funding.

17. *Less licensing needed* - the Internet does not need government licensing in the same way that a radio or TV station does or, as a newspaper may need. It is the most restriction-free form of mass communication and thus is one that missions agencies can with relative ease.

18. *Does not require the missionary to be in a certain fixed location* – a missionary who cannot be on the field because of health problems or visa difficulties can still reach his or her people group via the Internet. Also missionaries who travel extensively can still maintain a website.

19. *Very useful for pre-field preparation* - a missionary can chat with connected members of his or her people group online prior to going to that country. This can build useful relationships prior to arrival. Also a missionary can engage anonymously (online) with Muslims, Buddhists or Hindus to gain real experience of their viewpoint, and do so in relative safety, so that the missionary learns to handle many of the common arguments, objections and sensitive cultural issues prior to arrival on the field. This helped me a great deal prior to arriving in Mindanao in the southern Philippines. It could also be useful for helping short-term missionaries become more culturally aware prior to deployment.

20. *Enhanced credibility* - digital competence is a sign of personal and organizational credibility and is essential if 'digital natives' are going to respect the missionary or missions organization.

21. *Bypasses traditional denominational restrictions* – Many online practitioners started a website because they could not use their gift (teaching, preaching, cult ministry, evangelism) in a local church or denominational setting where the good positions are often tied up in an 'old boys' network' or in complex ordination requirements. Missions is often on the periphery of denominational concerns and certain issues such as training for Two-Thirds World pastors is often woefully neglected. Internet ministry has given people a chance to use their gifts and to solve problems that were not being (and perhaps would never have been) addressed by more traditional forms of ministry.

Effective 21st century missions agencies will develop vigorous and well-funded departments of Internet Evangelism and Cybermissions that will their main avenue for sharing Christ with the unreached and for following up enquirers and new believers. These departments will synergize with the other departments involved in worship, prayer, pastoral ministry and holistic ministry. Agencies that fail to do this will find themselves less and less able to communicate Christ to the non-Christian world as the global population shifts to digital devices as the primary means of credible personal communication.

The Implications For Missions In The 21st Century

The traditional missionary will always have a place but will have to work alongside colleagues who are engaged in Internet Evangelism and Cybermissions. Increasingly the impartation of information will occur online and on personal communication devices connected to the Internet. Offline ministry will involve dynamic worship, the administration of the sacraments, healing ministry, spiritual warfare, discipleship pastoral problem solving, and community engagement. The missional church will be able to engage its members between services by sending material to their personal communication devices and encouraging discussion on forums located on the church website. Giving can be via digital means as well as 'in the plate'.

One approach to blending online and offline aspects of ministry is 'multiple location' or 'multiple presence' churches such as www.lifechurch.tv which has 20,000 members meeting in 11 different locations around the USA. Each church receives the same message, broadcast from the senior pastor, while having local worship team and pastoral care Here is how it explains itself:

All experiences at LifeChurch.tv are comprised of the two primary elements: powerful worship and a life-changing message. Worship at LifeChurch.tv is led by a worship pastor along with a talented live band and the style is consistent with today's culture. All LifeChurch.tv campuses receive the same dynamic and relevant teaching messages each week via satellite broadcast from Senior Pastor Craig Groeschel or a LifeChurch.tv teaching pastor. A weekend experience lasts for one hour – you can always expect them to start and end on time. In addition, the local campus team will spend time engaging, connecting and doing ministry with the church body throughout the week.

The Rev. Yonggi Cho of Yoido Full Gospel Church in Korea uses a similar approach utilizing Korea's very fast broadband to the home, to broadcast services into home groups and house churches with donations being made online by credit card/ Paypal. And Menlo Park Presbyterian Church is aiming to invest some $20 million in multiple location technology to solve their space problem and bring their minister's preaching (Rev. John Ortberg) to more folk in the Silicon Valley area. These approaches all blend sophisticated digital input with personal care and small group ministry. This allows the church to have both the small church feel - and the big church pastor.

This combination of high tech and high touch will also apply to missions. Internet enabled house churches, simple churches, cell churches and small groups is one such option. Church growth advocates are often enthusiastic about simple church models as allowing rapid multiplication by removing the barriers to growth associated with a physical structure (such as obtaining government licenses and raising building program expenses). However simple churches have a long track record of doctrinal variance and leadership problems and they often lack resources in areas such as women's ministry and children's ministry. A centralized website for a house

church network can provide pastoral networking and encouragement, leadership development, doctrinal consistency, teaching outlines, videos, and ministry resources and allow people with gifts throughout the network to contribute ideas, information and resources to the network as a whole. Thus many of the advantages of a formal denominational structure can be provided, yet without the onerous administrative overhead. The website provides the sophisticated informational tools while the small group / house church structure enables deeper relationships, better discipleship and the development and practice of the spiritual gifts in a relatively safe environment. I am beginning to develop such an approach at www.eternitychristian.com

A similar approach can also be applied to holistic ministry and to small scale aid and development in the Two-Thirds World. There is often a considerable amount of duplication and 're-inventing of the wheel' in such efforts which could be prevented by online sharing of global best practices in each area. The information and wisdom of many different organizations would allow each organization to operate optimally while preserving the efficiencies, cultural adaptability and close to the community feel of smaller grass-roots efforts.

Information alone seldom accomplishes much in the way of community transformation. However information connected to vibrant small group structures does have the potential to be transformative. This principle of informed networks of small groups bringing transformation is seen in the dynamics of the early church, in Wesley and the development of Methodist cell groups, and in the blossoming of the student missions movement through campus bible studies and prayer groups. Thus Internet enabled simple churches and mutually informed grass-roots NGOs may become a vital part of the cutting edges of 21st century missions efforts.

Disintermediation is defined as: *The removal of an intermediary, or middleman, from a transaction or communication. An example is the option for a business to sell its product directly to consumers as opposed to retailers.*

The Internet is a powerful force that will disintermediate much of what is seen as standard in modern missions, for instance the traditional missions agency is removed as the middleman when:

1. Sending churches in the West communicate directly with churches and missionaries in the developing world rather than solely via the missions agency.

2. Donors give directly to national churches and aid projects that they have learned about online.

3. National pastors get their theological education online (without leaving their church and often for free) rather than at the approved seminary run by the missions agency.

4. A Christian wanting to reach the lost in 'country X' simply switches on their computer, finds people in that country, and shares Christ with them online rather than going through a long and arduous missionary selection process.

5. Prayer needs from the field are sent directly to intercessors without being vetted by the missions agency and prayer letters are sent directly to supporters by email without being typed up and mailed by the missions agency.

6. Visa applications and other government paperwork are done by the independent missionary online rather than through an approved in-country missionary agency representative usually

assigned to do such things. Travel arrangements, health insurance and other administrative tasks (even finding housing) is also increasingly done online reducing the requirement of belonging to a missions agency in order to do such things in the target country.

7. Missionaries receive funds instantly directly from supporters via Paypal rather receiving funds than months later once they have passed through mission agency accounting and had an (often sizable) percentage extracted.

8. Projects tend more and more to be inter-agency efforts networked through an egroup than intra-agency efforts managed solely by standard in-house communication.

9. Missionaries independently select the group they work with based on information obtained online at websites such as the Joshua Project rather than being assigned their field of service by the missions agency.

10. Pastoral care and support of missionaries is done by the home church using VOIP (Skype), email and annual personal visits and often exceeds the pastoral care given by most missions agencies to their staff.

11. Bible translation is done by a person from that language group located in the USA or other Western country and is field tested directly on a website with comments from missionaries and national leaders in the target country - thus simplifying the need for expensive in-country bible translation programs managed by a traditional missions agency.

12. A large part of missionary orientation can be done online, including language learning and chatting with members of the ethnic group under consideration (see page 11 above).
Thus the Internet is empowering independent missionaries and small missions agencies and disempowering and dis-intermediating the larger agencies with their huge administrative overheads. It is also allowing the rapid rise of smaller indigenous missions agencies in the developing world.

This is slowly but surely going to change the entire face of missions during the next ten years as Great Commission Christians realize they simply do not need to join a traditional missions agency in order to share the gospel cross-culturally in an effective manner. Fewer and fewer missionary candidates will line up to go out full-time with the major missions agencies. Instead fully committed Great Commission Christians will go as independent missionaries, or as missionaries sent by their local church or with 'mustard-seed' style small mission agencies consisting of a few friends with a common vision. A considerable number will catch the vision of Internet evangelism and share Christ from home, just using their broadband connection, combined with trips of just a few weeks long to make face to face connections on the field. Fundraising will be a major challenge for these smaller agencies and various tentmaking and business-as-mission approaches will be developed to assist with this need. Numerous indigenous missions agencies are arising and will arise and be empowered by the new technology.

Internet Cafes In Unreached People Groups

One example of how technology is impacting models of mission in the 21st century is the use of Internet cafes as self-supporting missions bases in unreached people groups (UPGs). An Internet café consisting of some 20 client computers is established in a suitable and secure location (such as the second floor of a building near a school, college or business district) and run by 2 or 3 indigenous missionaries who receive income from the operation of the Internet

cafe as a legitimate small business. Relationships with non-Christians are established as clients come in regularly to check their email or surf the web. Additional services are also offered such as VOIP, webcams, CD duplication, computer classes and photocopying. The witness is low-key and aims to bring customers to faith in Christ and incorporate them in a local church, bible study or house church. These icafes can economically set-up using a good server, donated recycled computers and thin-client technology which makes the older computers able to run applications from the server very quickly. The indigenous missionaries are thus able to establish themselves as a legitimate part of the business community and have a platform that enables them to come in contact with 100 or more local non- Christians each day for thirty minutes or more each. When these Internet cafes are properly run they have considerably boosted the development of church-planting movements among certain unreached people groups. Numerous missions agencies are now looking at Internet cafes as viable missions platforms and developing both non-profit educational computer centers as well as for-profit self-sustaining ventures. A micro-franchise model for Internet cafes is being actively developed by a group out of Regent University to help ensure the financial sustainability of this model. This illustrates how technology can empower the development of indigenous missions and how business-as-mission plus technology can have a powerful role in the future of global missions in the 21st century. Part of the equation here is that many developing nations have numerous people (including local believers) with very good IT skills who unfortunately have no outlet for employment. Thus the IT sector has great potential for mission agencies wanting to set up businesses in the developing world.

Computers And Evangelistic Persuasion

The recent book by B.J. Fogg *Persuasive Technology: Using Computers to Change What We Think And Do* argues that computers have six advantages over humans when it comes to the art of persuasion, they can:

1. Be more persistent than human beings
2. Offer greater anonymity
3. Manage huge volumes of data
4. Use many modalities to influence
5. Scale easily
6. Go where humans cannot go or may not be welcome

Dr. Fogg works at the Persuasive Technology Laboratory at Stanford University and focuses on how computers can be used to change human behavior in areas as diverse as quitting smoking, avoiding teenage pregnancy and personal hygiene monitoring. This has a fairly obvious application to online evangelism! If computers are (or can be made to be) more persuasive than human beings could they be better evangelists? Could a computer scan a sophisticated database, decide exactly how an individual should be approached, then approach them to make a secure anonymous response to the gospel in the privacy of their own home, using text, video, and audio, and touching hundreds of lives simultaneously, in a nation that has strict laws forbidding conventional missionary activity? To really 'jump the shark' and be controversial – could a computer generated personality known as an 'avatar' be the ultimate personal evangelist? (I think we are at least a decade away from the computing power needed to do that at reasonable cost, but I could be wrong). If we think 50 years out, to say 2057, Lord tarrying, could computer-generated avatars have become a major asset to global evangelization? There is even an interesting hint in Scripture that artificially intelligent personalities may exist in the Tribulation and be used as part of the worship of the Beast:

Revelation 13:15 MKJV *And there was given to it to give a spirit to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might both speak, and might cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.*
It is impossible to predict the methods we will be using for evangelism at the end of the 21st century and it may even sound foolish to try. However the mere exercise of doing so gets us to realize that many of the current methods of evangelism will be irrelevant by the time the children born today graduate from seminary - and that even the seminarian of today may be in for a mid-life crisis!

Immediate Technical Challenges For 21st Century Missions Agencies

It is not envisaged that missions agencies will design or manufacture communications technology or that they will even be involved in major software projects (such as automated translation software). What is envisaged is that missionaries and their organizations will become very savvy users of technology. Missionaries and their organizations will strategically deploy communications technology and the Internet to achieve the Great Commission. The following immediate technical challenges include some areas where the problem has been solved but has simply not been implemented effectively and at scale in the Christian world:

1. Evangelistic presentations for mobile devices (cellphones, PDAs, etc)

2. Short (5 minute or less) video clips for YouTube that present Christ clearly

3. Evangelistic audio clips (5 minutes to twenty minutes) and online tracts

4. A mission-friendly CMS (content management system) perhaps based on Joomla or Drupal

5. High quality production facilities for evangelistic podcasting & video-casting

6. A high-bandwidth secure server cluster dedicated to serving missions media

7. Improving Linux Thin Server Protocol for Internet cafes & icafe management software

8. Secure evangelistic response and follow-up systems capable of coping with non-ASCII

characters and with large numbers of respondents.

9. Good, open-source, text (SMS) to email gateway applications for crusade follow-up (an enquirer texts a question or response from their cell phone, this gets turned into an email that a pastor answers and the answer is then sent back to the enquirers phone.)

10. A website that lets ministries create their own Christian Internet radio station

11. Better online bible colleges and e-learning systems especially those that can handle Arabic and Asian languages and which allow much higher levels of user interaction and feedback.

12. Web-enabled house church and simple church networks and leadership training

13. Sophisticated websites devoted to facilitating holistic ministry and Christian aid and development.

14. The widespread adoption of effective online evangelism, particularly by local churches.

15. Far deeper and better contextualization of websites aimed at sharing Christ cross-culturally (not just translating a tract but putting it in the worldview and culture of the target group).

Organizational Challenges

The adoption of technology which transforms and disintermediates global missions is going to result in a new set of challenges for traditional mission agency structures. These will range from the incorporation of a department for Internet Evangelism and Cybermissions to the development of new criteria for measuring conversions, follow-up, discipleship, and the transformation of a people group.

How will supporters react to possible statements such as: *ABC mission established 5 cyber-churches in Hindi, Bengali, Urdu, Pashtun and Bhojpuri language groups with 80,000 indicated decisions for Christ and 158,000 regularly attending online video worship services?*

It is currently extremely difficult to raise funds for cyber-ministry and it may take twenty years or more for many missions supporters to be comfortable with the notion of online decisions and cyberchurches. While cyber-ministry will be having a huge strategic impact, nonetheless it will probably not be well-funded. This will slow down adoption as missions agencies, while wanting to get better results, will not want to commit financial suicide and so will focus their efforts on more traditional ministries which have greater appeal to supporters. Hints of this are seen in many missions websites today which can be little more than 'web brochures' extolling the agency, with a large "Donate Now By Paypal" button in a prominent location.

The development of serious, well-funded and missiologically informed cyber-outreaches is an urgent priority. Some ninety organizations are doing high-quality Internet evangelism in the Muslim world because face-to-face evangelism carries so many risks. The fruit is already evident, and by many accounts the majority of Muslims making decisions for Christ are doing so online. Similar efforts need to be done for the other major religious blocks and cultural groupings.

Internet Evangelism and Cybermissions has not yet entered the mainstream curriculum. Only four courses exist and I am involved with three of them – lecturing in an online MAGL course in Internet Evangelism and Cybermissions at Fuller, running my own online course at Cybermissions.Org, and revamping the free Internet Evangelism Coalition course at webevangelism.com. The Billy Graham Center at Wheaton runs the only other course in this topic. If this area is to be taught in bible colleges and seminaries a textbook will be required, possibly as a joint effort by leading experts in the field.

A handful of very large organizations (such as Campus Crusade and various radio ministries) have begun to adopt Internet evangelism strategies and there are a host of small operators and lone website builders. Still others have adopted a certain aspect of information technology such as Elearning or multiple location churches. The full realization of the impact of the Internet of 21st century missions is yet to be felt and very few denominations or major agencies are planning to have an Internet Evangelism department. Tony Whittaker and the Internet Evangelism Coalition sponsor an Internet Evangelism Day in may each year and this is a small but valuable effort towards creating awareness. The fact that Internet Evangelism and Cybermissions is not happening in major missions agencies does not mean that it will not happen at all. There is a low barrier to entry and Christians, moved by the Holy Spirit, will start

going online and sharing Jesus - and thousands are already doing so. Christians are 'gossiping the gospel' all over the Internet! Thus the proclamation of the gospel in the 21st century may well move away from the corporate giants of the evangelical world and into the hands of inter-connected independent small bands of believers who create gospel presentations in their own languages and then share them on the web, in chat rooms, and by video and audio and also developing presentations for the world of increasingly sophisticated mobile devices. I am not proclaiming the end of the corporate giants of the evangelical world, but I am saying that with the technology, tools and information available today the task of the Great Commission will increasingly move into the hands of indigenous believers equipped with broadband Internet connections.

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Did You Know : http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljbI-363A2Q Created by Karl Fisch, and modified by Scott McLeod; Globalization and The Information Age

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Ten Ways the Internet is changing Mission and Evangelism

There are currently 1.7 billion active Internet users, another 3 billion active Internet users are expected to be added in the next five years or so. The developing world will soon go online as cellphones become smartphones and as cheap digital devices such as netbooks and e-readers proliferate. The roll-out of fiber-optic cable in Africa and massive satellite communications projects will also mean that bandwidth availability and reach will increase. Within five years at least half the globe should be online, and within fifteen years Internet reach should be almost universal. Global proclamation will soon be within the reach of any Christian with a computer. The changes are not only quantitative, they are also qualitative. The very nature and dynamics of Christian ministry are being fundamentally altered due to the new possibilities for relationship, connectivity and information delivery that the Internet has brought about. The very heart of how we minister is being changed forever in at least ten significant areas:

1. **Information:** The Internet is bringing an enormous amount of timely strategic information into the hands of even the smallest church or mission agency. These include religious and cultural statistics, demographics, compilations such as Operation World, and research websites such as Joshua Project, Caleb Project, and StrategicNetwork. This is allowing us to see the big picture better than before and even to drill down to the small details that affect how we implement our evangelism strategies.

2. **Ratiocination:** People "think aloud" in cyberspace. The theology and practice (including ecclesiology and missiology) of most Christians is now mainly formed as a peer-to-peer online process with occasional expert input. There is less and less reference to decisions promulgated by the central governing ecclesiastical bodies of the major world religions. People do their own thinking, and they do so increasingly online - through sources such as Wikipedia, old out-of-copyright commentaries, and through browsing various websites, egroups and postings on social networks. Those ministries who wish to influence opinion need to start doing so in cyberspace because that is where Christian opinion is largely now being formed.

3. **Exploration:** People do their private, personal and controversial thinking online. If a person wants to find out about a suspected medical matter or investigate a forbidden political opinion they first check it out online. A Muslim wishing to find out about Christianity is not going to ask their family or their imam, rather he or she will look at Christian websites. About a quarter of all Internet users make regular queries about religious matters. They are exploring their own and other faiths. The Church needs to have an evangelistic, apologetic and missionary presence in this new global marketplace of ideas.

4. **Collaboration:** The Internet is facilitating collaboration across denominational boundaries, and across national borders. Experts and now able to link up with other experts in fields such as church-planting and theological education. This collaboration is making the denomination almost obsolete. Most Christian workers now operate in networks rather than in denominational silos. People are now partnering with like-minded specialists in their area of interest rather than with people who totally agree with their formal belief system.

5. **Validation:** People use the Internet to check things out. This applies to everything from a "too good to be true" investment scam to the local church they plan to attend when they move to a new city. One oft-quoted statistic is that 85% of young people check out a church's website before deciding whether or not to even visit that church in the first place. They won't even walk

though your door until they have clicked through your website! Churches and organizations that are easy to validate online have a huge competitive advantage. This includes having a clear statement of faith and making your ethos, programs, times of meetings, address, contact information, operating principles and finances clear and above board to the honest online enquirer.

6. **Allocation of Resources:** The Internet is allowing donors, foundations and churches to efficiently assess projects and receive applications for funding across national boundaries. Groups such as JIMI (the Joint Information Management Initiative of the WEA-MC) and the Global Missions Fund are trying to refine this process of allocation so that the ministries who are most worthy are most funded. A big part of this is having trusted mission information facilitators who regularly supply quality information in a secure format so that it can be used for resource allocation purposes.

7. **Proclamation:** The gospel is being proclaimed on websites, in chat rooms, on YouTube, on cellphones and on numerous Internet-connected devices. Evangelistic crusades are using the internet both as a decision mechanism and as a follow-up mechanism. Organizations such as Global Media Outreach, Jesus Central, TopChretien and GodRev specialize in purely online outreach while many churches and organizations use the Internet as an augmentation of existing outreach strategies. The Internet is an economical means of proclamation and Internet missionaries do not need visas!

8. **Education:** Online education has been a huge success and has revitalized TEE and distance education. Groups such as MAF Learning technologies are working at developing highly effective Internet based pedagogy. Many masters and Ph.D. Programs are now partly or wholly via Internet-based distance education.

9. **Mobilization:** The Internet facilitates making the connections and the imparting of the information and motivation necessary for effective mobilization of pastors, evangelists and missionaries into the global harvest. ChristianVolunteering.org matches tens of thousands of volunteers with Christian agencies. A ministry without an online presence will soon find it very challenging to gain new recruits since for many people the ministry simply will "not exist".

10. **Multiplication:** The Internet brings leverage to networks and enables contacts to be made for the multiplication of house and cell churches, church-planting movements and small TEE based bible colleges that are resourced via an Internet-based curriculum.

People start searching for a new church by going online, people first start their search for information about God online, and people start forming their theology online. Missionaries deciding which organization they will serve with, or students deciding on which bible college to attend - will use online information to narrow down their choices. The Internet is not the be all and end all of ministry. But it is quickly becoming the starting point for all ministry. And without the starting point there are not many other points! I used to think of the Internet as a tool for outreach, much like having your own radio program. Now I see the internet as an ocean in which we must sink or swim.

How to Have a Big Ministry on a Small Budget

Pray – Get God's Ideas First

Pray - and ask the Lord what sort of Internet ministry He wants. Ask Him about:

- The Timing
- The Spiritual Tone
- The Target group
- The Technology
- The Name
- The Branding

Find Your Spiritual Passion

- What would Jesus do with your website?
- How would Jesus treat visitors to the website?
- Does the website convey a sense of the sacred?
- Does it reach out and welcome people?
- Does it extend God's Kingdom in some way?
- Does it meet a need that Jesus would want to have met?
- Have you got a word from God about it?

Put Ministry First

- See your website as a *ministry that changes lives* and NOT just as a brochure that advertises a church or a corporation.
- Put the ministry aspects first and foremost.
- Give people a way to be transformed.
- What changes do you want to make? Salvation, education, sanctification etc.
- Tell stories.
- Touch hearts and touch minds.
- Think outreach - remember the seeking non-Christian, jargon free.

Be Specific As Possible

- The more specific the focus the more people will visit your website! (Look at the Alexa top 500 to see this)
- Very general websites get lost in Google (e.g. a website about "God")
- Unique specific websites rise to the top of the search engines for their keywords
- Unsuccessful: Buying groceries online
- Successful: Buying vintage wines online
- The power of 'the long tail'

Plan – Do a SWOT Analysis

- **Strengths** – internal assets and strengths
- **Weaknesses** – internal liabilities and weaknesses
- **Opportunities** – external openings and opportunities
- **Threats** – external competitors, physical, legal and technological threats.

Plan – 5 W's and H

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?
- How?

The Learning Curve

- Allow 3 – 6 months of trial and error to learn about the technology and the market.
- You will probably completely redesign the website at the end of this time.
- No sacred cows.
- If it works do more of it.
- If it does not work, then stop doing it.
- Learn WHO really wants what you are offering.
- Learn HOW they want it delivered to them.
- Learn WHAT things need to change in your website design and structure.
- Make no major investments during the learning phase.

Be Realistic
Unrealistic: To be the next Christian MySpace (unless you have a few million dollars to spend on a server farm and bandwidth). **Realistic**: To have an online ministry to thousands of NFL fans.
- Specific
- Unique
- Under Your Control
- Low Bandwidth Demands
- Not Requiring An Army of Volunteers / Staff
- Low Legal / Administrative Burdens
- Low Fixed Costs

Where Many Folks Fail

- Sites requiring lots of other people to do some work: Wikis, MySpace clones, large specialized forums.
- Sites requiring constant moderation and legal alertness e.g. youth discussion sites, chat rooms, video upload sites.
- Sites requiring video or audio streaming or any complex technology that can go AWOL at 2 am in the morning.
- Sites requiring their own dedicated server – a server is a lot of hard work.

Keep It Simple Stupid

- Simple for your users to use and for you to maintain.
- Simple and clear in its concept (not too big and fuzzy).
- Simple in the amount of work that needs to be done by users if it is to be a success.
- Simple in its structure so it can grow without becoming 'messy'.
- Simple and clear in its 'ethos' so that you do not have conflicting groups at war with each other.

Outsourcing High-Cost Services

- Minimize technical load, bandwidth cost and legal responsibility by 'outsourcing' to free or low-cost services.
- Use a web-hosting service so you do not have to manage your own servers e.g 1and1.com.
- Use Yahoo groups for your egroups.
- Use Gmail and Google Apps For Your Domain rather than being responsible for people's email.
- Put your video content on YouTube and let them pay the bandwidth fees and just link to it.

Don't Re-invent the Wheel

- 9.9% of the time the service or application that you require has already been done and is out there somewhere - and is often available for free.
- It is better to spend 3 hrs searching on Google than 3 months writing code.
- Go to forums and ask other people what they use to do X (the task / function you want done).
- Sometimes you can add two products together to get the result that you want.
- ***Effectiveness is more important than uniqueness.***

Start Lean

- Start with just a few services on your website and then add others as traffic grows.
- Focus people on to the main things.
- No one now comes to a website because it has so many bells and whistles, instead they are confused and distracted rather than impressed.
- People leave websites that they see have many unused forums, etc.
- Undisciplined areas full of spam posts look terrible.
- Do what you can easily maintain, moderate and keep active and professional looking.

Zero Cost Online Ministry

- Chat room ministry (in existing chat rooms).
- Newsgroup ministry.
- Blogging –Blogger.com or Wordpress.com.
- Writing articles for ezines.
- Running an egroup such as a Yahoo group.
- Volunteering as a moderator on someone else's website.

- Uploading Christian videos to YouTube.
- Uploading ebooks to Christian ebook collections.
- You produce the content and let someone else host it!

Low Cost Online Ministry

- Get a low-cost web hosting provider such as www.1and1.com ($4.95 a month).
- Get a domain name from a reseller such as godaddy.com, enom.com, or 1and1.com.
- Get a LINUX website.
- Use LAMP (Linux, Apache, MYSQL, PHP) software which is often Open source, free, and powerful.
- Get images from everystockphoto.com.

Media on the Cheap

- Use Audacity for podcasting.
- Use other people's bandwidth for free / low cost.
- Upload to hosting sites (do not host your own).
- Get a virtual server if you have a lot of media.
- Host your media on Gospelcom media server! (Some cost recovery)

Stages for a Website

- Prayer
- Planning
- Web hosting package
- Register Domain name
- Branding
- Initial site design
- Upload content
- Search engine optimization
- Advertising & Free Publicity
- Visitors Arrive
- Get Feedback / Web Statistics
- Evaluation & Improvement
- Redesign

Getting Ready

- Web Hosting: http://webhostinggeeks.com/
  Bluehost, Yahoo, 1and1.com are OK
- Domain names: enom.com , godaddy.com, tucows.com, Register.com
- Get a domain name that is easy to remember even if it is a bit long.
  www.crocodilesarecute.com is better than www.xcfgt.com

Branding

- Don't try to appeal to everyone
- Decide on a 'look' that reflects your core mission and purpose

- Be instantly recognizable to your key demographic so they say 'Yes that's me.!'
- Decide of a color combination and a simple logo
- Avoid kitsch – flashing gifs, Amazing Grace, video clips of the Passion – unless you audience likes kitsch.

Initial Site Design

- http://ied.gospelcom.net
- http://guide.gospelcom.net
- www.cybermissions.org
- Keep it simple, easy to navigate and use.
- Put only what is working well on the site when you start off
- Simple but credible.
- Contact details, usage policy, privacy policy, statement of beliefs etc.
- Always have a How To Become A Christian link somewhere.
- Go easy on commercialism.

Uploading Content

- Use a FTP client such as FileZilla.
- Upload your files to the www/html/ directory on your server.
- The main page should be called index.html.
- The pages should be arranged in a hierarchy with the index page at the top of the tree.
- The hierarchy should only go three or four layers deep at most.
- The index page should have the key links to the most important material on the website.
- Plan the structure well at the start as it is very hard to change later on as other people, and search engines will link to your content.
- Short directory names, all lower case, and eight letters or less, are helpful.

Getting Known

- WebCEo – great FREE search engine optimization software – submits your URL to hundreds of search engines http://webceo.com/ .
- Put URL on email signature, business cards, etc.
- Advertise (tactfully) in appropriate egroups and newsgroups.
- Have a 'recommend to others' button on your website.
- Email campaigns to opt-in recipients.

Feedback and Interactivity

- Invite people to comment, feedback, leave prayer points etc.
- Forms
- Guestbooks
- Forums
- Message Boards
- Surveys / Polls
- Email Us…
- Live Chat (only if you have a LOT of traffic)
- http://www.resourceindex.com/ (has heaps of good website add-ons)

Web Statistics

- Your web host will probably give you some statistics.
- Or you can use a package such as Awstats.
- Hits is not as important as unique visitors, length of time on the website and what pages they are mainly looking at.
- Country is important if you are trying to reach a particular region.

Saving on Software

- www.1computerbargains.com (for 501c3 organizations)
- www.openoffice.org – free substitute for Microsoft Office
- The GIMP – replacement for Photoshop - http://www.gimp.org/
- Open Source Software – www.sourceforge.net
- List of free HTML editors: http://www.thefreecountry.com/webmaster/htmleditors.shtml

Volunteers

- Students
- Interns
- Retirees
- People with at least 2 hrs a week to spare
- Clearly defined task.
- Sense of the overall mission and its importance.
- Some autonomy / respect
- Fun – pizza, coffee
- Relationship
- Equipment that works for them.

Funding

- Paypal: www.paypal.com
- Ikobo: www.ikobo.com
- Have a good ministry plan and funding proposal
- Relationship based fundraising / Friend-Raising
- Do not expect a salary during the first year (keep your day job)
- Try www.gobignetwork.com for venture capital
- Try Generous Giving Marketplace for grants:http://www.generousgiving.org/marketplace/

Marketing

- Make your own business cards and brochures.
- Do press releases for local papers desperate for news & to Christian news services e.g. ANS.
- Send faxes to new outlets with big bold headings.
- Try your denominational magazine.
- Have a clear newsworthy concept that you communicate over and over again.
- Show who you are helping and how you are helping them.
- Get some books & articles on how to get free publicity.

Conclusion

- A small ministry can have a big impact for Christ if it is well-thought out and tightly targeted.
- It is possible to greatly reduce costs and start-up can be done on even as little as $100 a year.
- Use the power of other people: networks, free advice, volunteers, free online services, free press releases, etc.
- Cover everything in prayer – God is your greatest ally and can multiply your ministry!

The Internet Missionary Society Of 2020

The Internet began to affect our lives in 1994 with the creation of the World Wide Web and the Mosaic web browser. Shortly after that Christians began to share their faith with others in cyberspace and Internet evangelism and cybermissions was born. In this article I would like to jump another thirteen years down the track and look at what Internet evangelism and cybermissions might look like in the year 2020.

The Internet is rapidly moving from the personal computer to the cellphone and it is predicted that the number of Internet users will go from the current 1.14 billion to over 3 billion by 2010 (just three years away) mainly due to this growth of Internet-capable hand-held devices (e.g. cellphones, PDA's and the Blackberry). Indeed Microsoft has just announced Phone+ - an initiative to bring TV (as well as everything else) to your cellphone. Hand-held devices will soon have really useful screen sizes. The latest Popular Science magazine (May 2007) showcases a five-inch Polymer Vision flexible screen that "rolls-up" inside the unit . By 2010 this flexible screen will be larger, in color and be capable of handling web browsing and video. Of course your hand-held device will also dock with your wide-screen digital TV, your laptop or any other viewing platform. The included video camera will be augmented by higher processing power and bandwidth to enable quality video conferencing from your lounge room.

So we see that highly sophisticated content will be downloadable to 3 billion personal handheld devices by 2010. The personal communication device will be how people interact with friends, family and colleagues and the first place they turn to find out information about the gospel. It will be the main way people accept information into their lives and therefore the main way that we will have to communicate the gospel. The hand-held device would allow streaming video (or text or audio) of gospel presentations. Enquirers would be able to contact the mission agency on the Internet, or by SMS (text), email, fax, VOIP (voice over internet protocol e.g. Vonage, Skype) or by normal mobile or landline voice call.

Progress in information technology is exponential. The famous formulation of this known as Moore's Law is named after Gordon Moore of Intel who observed (in 1965) that the number of transistors on an integrated circuit for minimum component cost was doubling every two years. This has largely held true since then and processing power per thousand dollars is now doubling every twelve to eighteen months. If this continues all the way to 2020 (thirteen years from now) the first glimpses of artificial intelligence will be taking hold in our lives.

Tech guru Ray Kurzweil (inventor and author of books such as *The Age Of Spiritual Machines* and *The Singularity Is Near*) uses this exponential curve to predict that a super-computer will emulate human intelligence sometime around the year 2013 and that a $1000 computer will emulate human intelligence in 2029. Previously difficult problems such as image recognition, speech recognition, handwriting analysis and language translation are rapidly being solved. A prototype of a translating telephone that automatically translates between English, French and German was unveiled in San Francisco in April 2007 and a DARPA software project translated between English and Arabic at the level of professional translators. Some have predicted that before 2015 cellphones will contain automatic translation software (probably at first in a dozen or so major languages) and that soon after we will be able to use our personal communication device to talk to practically anyone in the world. This of course will revolutionize the task of missions!

Highly specialized artificial intelligence programs (called "narrow AI") will be able to do common customer service functions and sophisticated computer generated personalities known as 'avatars' will interact with users and act as a type of virtual salesperson. These avatars are capable of being programmed with the hundred (or more) most common questions that enquirers ask. They will be endowed with a patient and understanding artificial personality and be able to lead enquirers through the plan of salvation and even through some basic pre-baptismal follow-up lessons. We are on the verge of it already in communities like Second Life where believers are already witnessing to Christ - as their computer-generated avatars. Sitepal.com already provides customizable avatars for websites, and the Genesys IP Contact Center is already using avatars to handle customer service queries for CartaSi - the Italian credit card company.

By using avatars and information technology our Internet missions agency could reach tens of millions of enquirers annually with the plan of salvation and then connect them with local churches in their area. So the evangelism department of our missionary society in 2020 may well consist of six geeks, a server farm and four hundred of these computer generated avatars! Each avatar may well share the gospel with a different cluster of unreached people groups. Of course there will still be plenty of room for face-to-face missionary activity such as worship, baptism, communion, counseling, exorcism, small group bible study and the use of spiritual gifts.

The rise in technology will also mean that average users can become sophisticated content creators who can make their own video, audio and text presentations of the gospel. Thus proclamation will become many-to-many as new believers excitedly share their testimonies and experiences of Christ. As video-conferencing becomes commonplace these believers will naturally bring each other together into small groups and virtual churches online. Distance education and TEE (Theological Education by Extension) will be revolutionized and technology will allow a missionary to inexpensively conduct large-scale training by video while being simultaneously translated into dozens of different languages. Pastors and community leaders will be able to be trained without being removed from their ministry context. Touch interfaces with symbols, voice recognition and improved interface usability will make it easy for non-literates to use technology and to benefit from it.

The power of technology to proclaim and inform needs to be matched with the power of the local church to disciple and mature individual believers. Hopefully technology will augment the process of discipleship and free many Christian workers to focus on being one-to-one mentors. The gospel will of course remain the same but how it is delivered, who is communicating it, and the means of responding to it will be profoundly changed.

Strategies in Cybermissions

The purpose of this article is use broad-brush statistics to help us to do some first-order prioritization for Internet evangelism and Cybermissions. The assumption is that Internet evangelism is best used when: the harvest is plentiful, the conventional laborers are 'few', and yet Internet penetration is adequate. For the initial part of this article I have drawn extensively on research by my friend Chris Maynard, a British information manager and missions supporter. The first question we need to ask is '*where is the Harvest Field, that is where are all the non-Christians*?
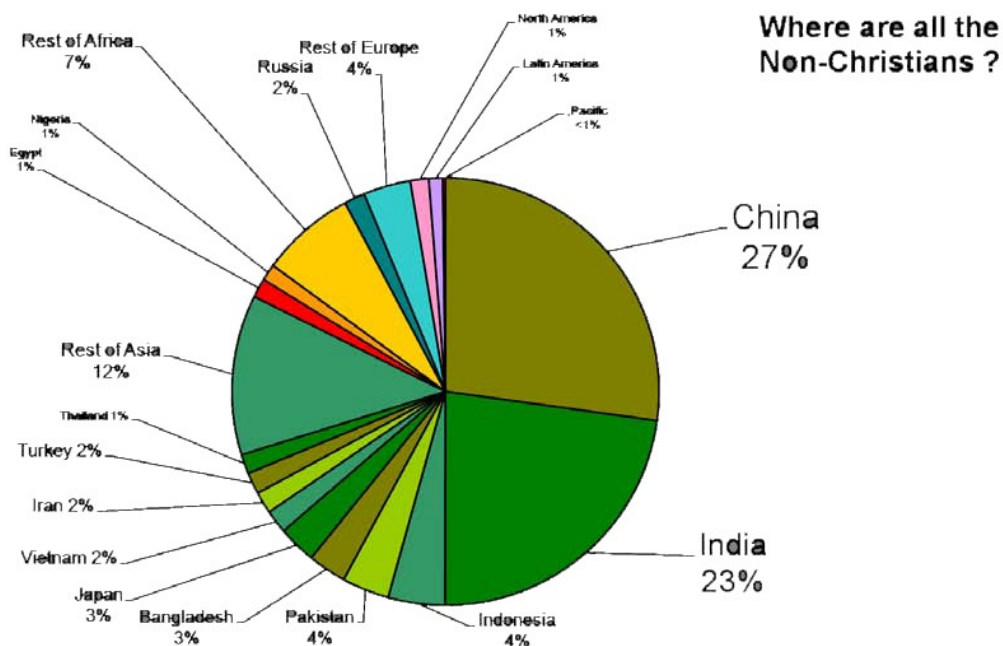
Diagram by Chris Maynard using data from Operation World 2000

So we can see that 50% of the non-Christians are in just two nations – India and China. Both India and China have reasonable Internet connectivity in many of their urban areas. Other nations with large numbers of non-Christians and significant connectivity include: Indonesia, Pakistan, Japan, Turkey, and Thailand.

The second question we need to ask is: '*Where are all the Internet users and how do they overlap with the Harvest Field?*':

The following four diagrams are from Internet World Statistics website (www.internetworldstats.com). They indicate significant and large numbers of Internet users in the key areas that we want to evangelize (such as China and India). They also indicate strong Internet penetration among areas where there are large numbers of evangelicals (such as the USA) who can become online workers in the harvest. For instance a Chinese-speaking American evangelical could go online to help evangelize China, or an Urdu-speaking Australian evangelical could go online to witness to Pakistan.

Internet Users in the World
by Geographic Regions

Region	Millions of Users
Asia	657.2
Europe	393.4
North America	251.3
Latin America / Caribbean	173.6
Africa	54.2
Middle East	45.9
Oceania / Australia	20.8

Millions of Users
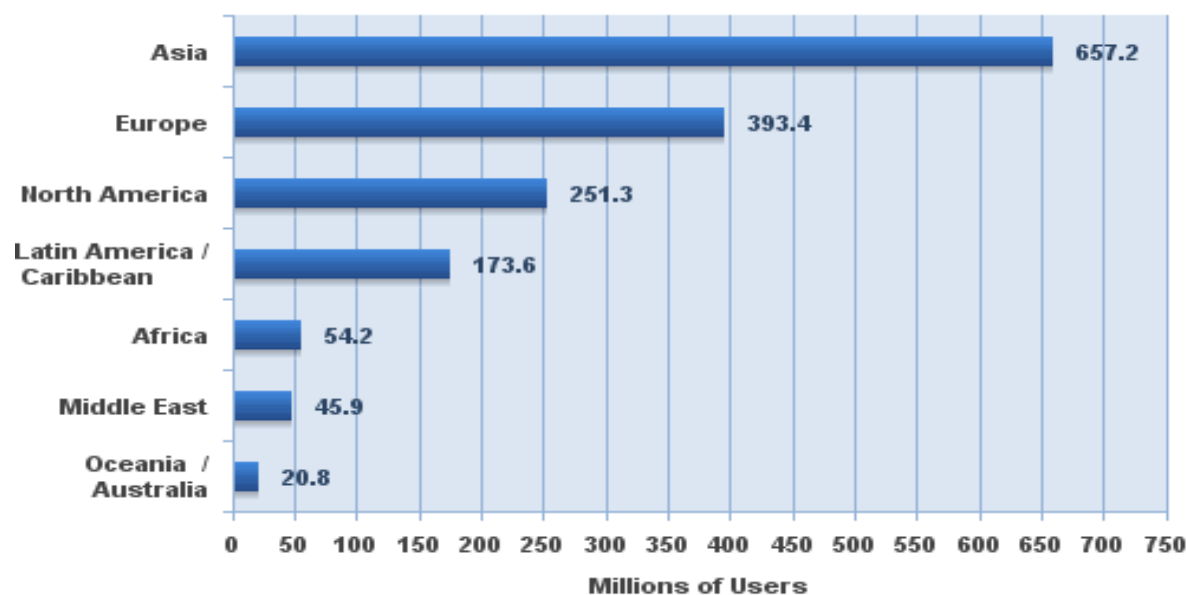
Source: Internet World Stats - www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm
Estimated Internet users are 1,596,270,108 for March 31, 2009
Copyright © 2009, Miniwatts Marketing Group

World Internet Users
by World Regions

- Asia — 41.2%
- Europe — 24.6%
- North America — 15.7%
- Latin America / Caribbean — 10.9%
- Africa — 2.9%
- Middle East — 3.4%
- Oceania / Australia — 1.3%
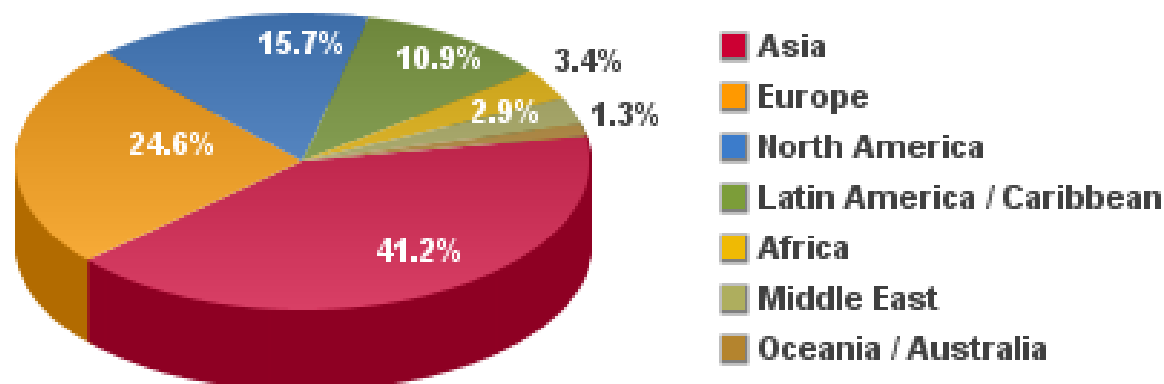
Source: Internet World Stats - www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm
1,596,270,108 Internet users for March 31, 2009
Copyright © 2009, Miniwatts Marketing Group

Top 10 Languages in the Internet
millions of users

Language	Millions of Users
English	452
Chinese	321
Spanish	129
Japanese	94
French	73
Portuguese	73
German	65
Arabic	41
Russia	38
Korean	37
All the rest	258

Millions of Users
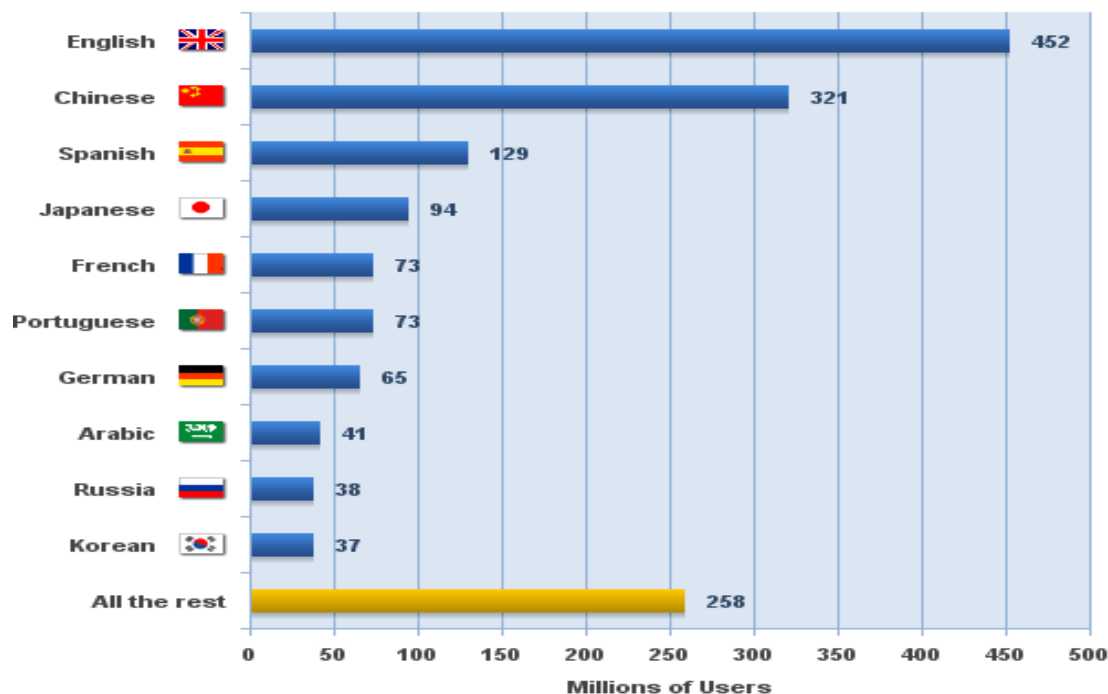
Source: Internet World Stats - www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm
Estimated Internet users is 1,581,571,589 for 2008
Copyright © 2009, Miniwatts Marketing Group

World Internet Penetration Rates
by Geographic Regions

Region	Penetration Rate
North America	74.4%
Oceania / Australia	60.4%
Europe	48.9%
Latin America / Caribbean	29.9%
Middle East	23.3%
Asia	17.4%
Africa	5.6%
World, Avg.	23.8%
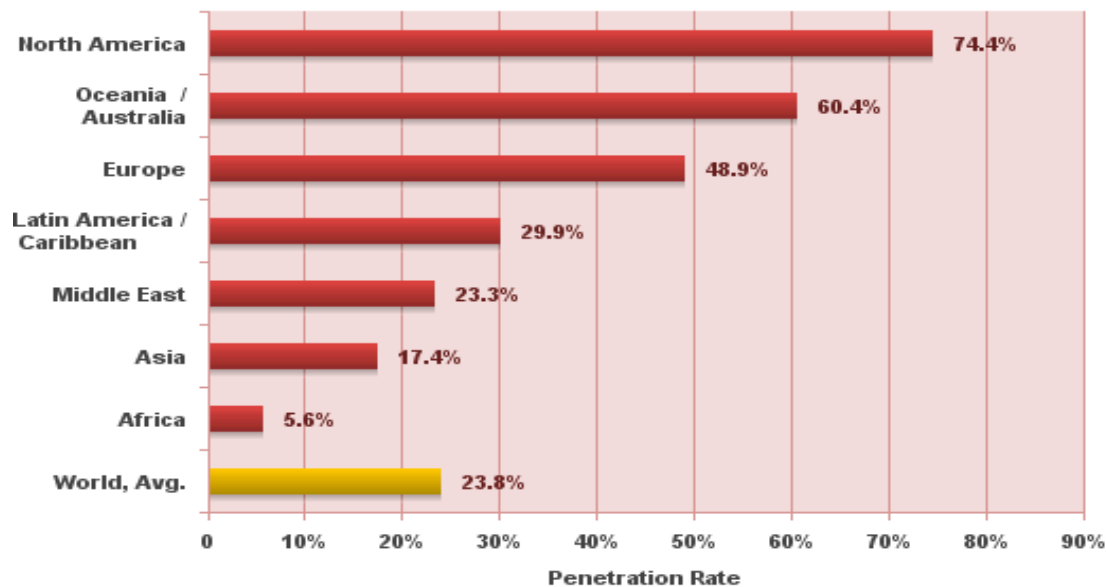
Penetration Rate

Source: Internet World Stats - www.internetworldststs.com/stats.htm
Penetration Rates are based on a world population of 6,710,029,070
and 1,596,270,108 estimated Internet users for March, 2009.
Copyright © 2009, Miniwatts Marketing Group

So we see a fairly high degree of overlap between where the non-Christians are and where the Internet is growing fastest. The next question must be – *where are all the laborers for the Harvest Field?* Where are all the Christians? And in particular do these laborers speak any of the Big Three languages of the Internet (English, Chinese and Spanish)?
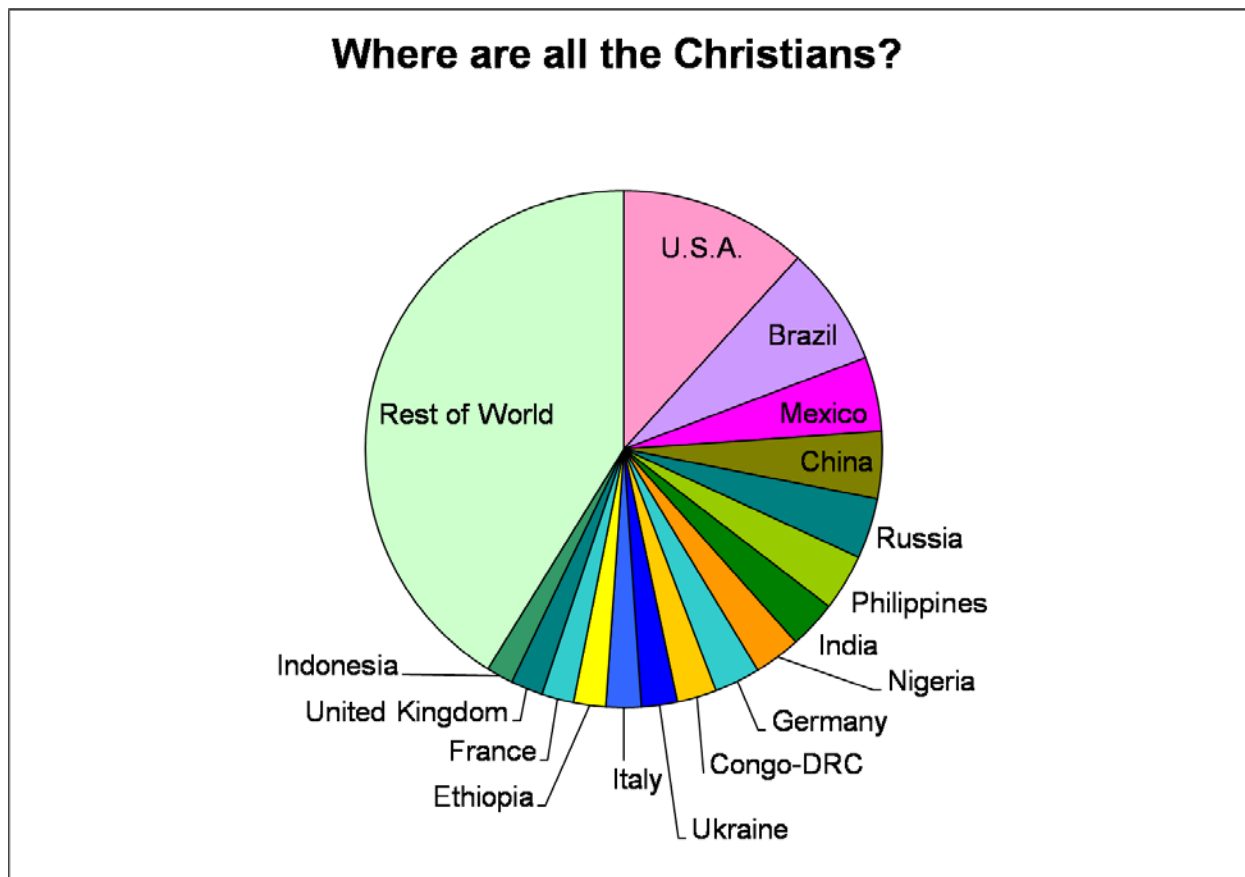
Diagram by Christ Maynard using data from Operation World 2000

We see large numbers of laborers in the USA, Brazil, Mexico, China, Russia, the Philippines and India! So perhaps the Christians in China can use the Internet to reach other Chinese Christians; and the Indian Christians can use the Internet to reach India for Christ; and the Mexican evangelicals can use the Internet to reach the Latin world; and the Brazilian Christians can reach the Portuguese-speaking Internet; and the German Christians can use cyberspace to reach the German-speaking Internet and so on. Thus the strategy in many situations becomes: *training and enabling the national church in how to use the Internet to reach its own people, and also in how to reach unreached people groups who speak the same language (as that national church).*

Chris Maynard then took the data one step further by then asking – **what are the priority harvest fields where the harvest are plentiful and the laborers are few.** His next diagram is below:

Priority Harvestfields for International Attention

How Many MILLION Non-Christians

10000
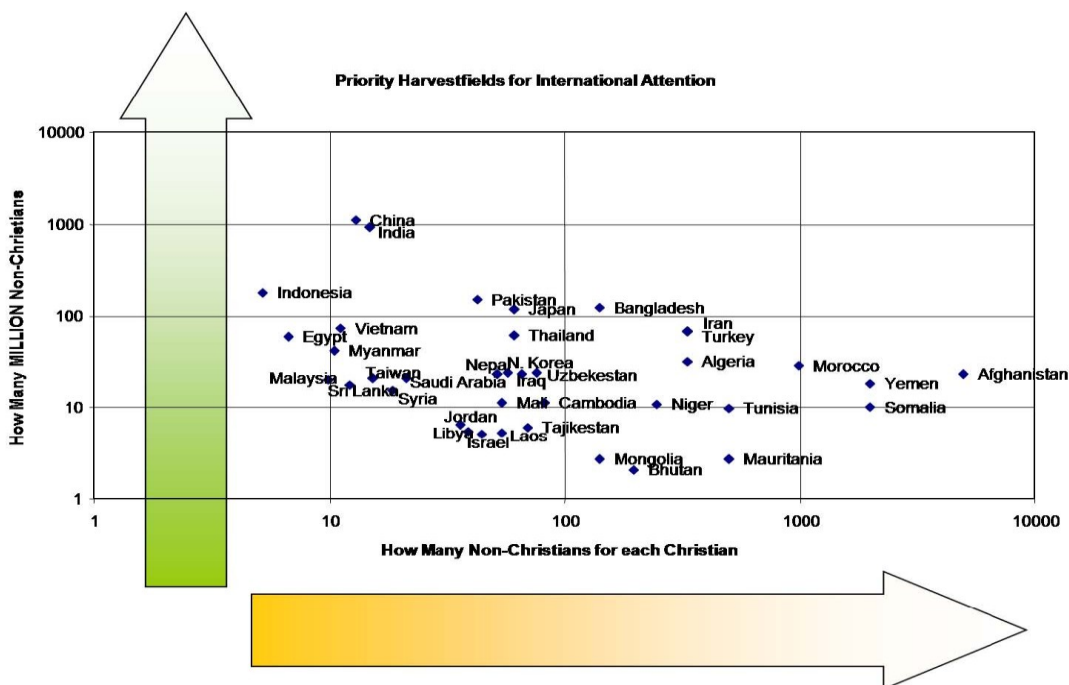1000
100
10
1

China
India
Indonesia
Pakistan
Japan
Bangladesh
Iran
Turkey
Egypt
Vietnam
Thailand
Myanmar
Algeria
Morocco
Nepal
N. Korea
Afghanistan
Malaysia
Taiwan
Uzbekestan
Yemen
Sri Lanka
Saudi Arabia
Iraq
Syria
Mali
Cambodia
Niger
Somalia
Jordan
Tunisia
Libya
Israel
Laos
Tajikestan
Mongolia
Mauritania
Bhutan

1   10   100   1000   10000

How Many Non-Christians for each Christian

Diagram by Christ Maynard using data from Operation World 2000

Please note that the scales are *logarithmic!*

The 38 countries include: ALL six countries in the world with more than 100 million non-Christians ALL 13 sizeable countries where there are more than a hundred non-Christians to every Christian. (Maldives and Comoros are the smaller ones not included) ALL 26 countries of the world where there are more than 10 million non-Christians AND more than 10 non-Christians to every Christian

All 38 countries are in the 10/40 Window, although not all countries in the window are on the chart. More than 80% of the non-Christians in the world are found in these 38 countries – which are less than 20% of countries.

The chart excludes for example: Russia with 64 Million non-Christians because there are more Christians than non-Christians (the harvest is plentiful, but there should be plenty of workers available) Palestinian Authority with 51 non-Christians to every Christian, because there are less than 4 Million non-Christians in total (the workers are few, but the harvest is relatively small)

(Note: the definition of Christian in Operation World is fairly generic and may not necessarily mean evangelical Christian)

The table below takes the 38 countries above, re-includes Russia (my personal decision in light of the low percentage of evangelicals there) and then *sorts them by Internet penetration and suitability for Internet evangelism*. The result is that we find *20 countries where the harvest is plentiful, the laborers are few, but they are suitable for Internet evangelism*. Internet figures are from March-April 2009 Internet World Statistics (broadband penetration) and from the ITU when up-to-date IWS statistics were not available

Country	Internet Users	Penetration	Possible Strategies
Israel	5,263,146	74.00%	Messianic Jewish websites
Japan	94,000,000	73.80%	Manga, comics, technology bridge sites
Malaysia	15,868,000	62.80%	Malay, English languages, train Malaysian church in IE
Iran	23,000,000	34.90%	Farsi, websites, chat rooms, security conscious evangelism
Russia	38,000,000	27.00%	Addiction counseling
Saudi Arabia	6,380,000	22.70%	security conscious online evangelism, Skype, etc
China	298,000,000	22.40%	equip Chinese church to engage in IE
Turkey	21,000,000	21.10%	direct evangelism online
Taiwan	4,505,800	19.60%	Chinese language evangelism, dealing w. relationships, magic
Jordan	1,126,700	18.20%	Arabic, chat rooms, websites , Skype
Tunisia	1,765,430	17.00%	As above
Egypt	10,532,400	12.90%	As above
Thailand	8,473,000	12.60%	Thai, equip Thai church to witness online
Syria	2,132,000	10.80%	Arabic, 43hat rooms, websites , Skype
Indonesia	25,000,000	10.50%	Equip Indonesian church to witness online
Algeria	3,500,000	10.40%	Arabic, chat rooms, websites , Skype
Mongolia	268,300	10.30%	Mongolian church is in revival, equip to witness online
Pakistan	17,500,000	10.10%	Encourage and strengthen Pakistani church leaders
India	81,000,000	7.10%	Train Indian Christians in online ministry
Uzbekistan	1,745,000	6.60%	Direct evangelism online
Bhutan	40,000	5.90%	Difficult, few online, rare language
Libya	260,000	4.20%	Security concerns
Sri Lanka	771,700	3.70%	Train Sri Lankan church to witness online
Afghanistan	500,000	1.50%	direct evangelism online
Laos	100,000	1.50%	Low percentage, Strict surveillance
Yemen	320,000	1.40%	Arabic, chat rooms, websites , Skype
Morocco	390,800	1.30%	Arabic, chat rooms, websites , Skype
Nepal	250,000	1.00%	Difficult, train Nepali church to witness online
Iraq	275,000	1.00%	Arabic, chat rooms, websites , Skype
Somalia	98,000	1.00%	Arabic, chat rooms,

			websites , Skype
Mauritania	30,000	1.00%	French-speaking, few Internet users
Mali	100,000	0.80%	French-speaking, few Internet users
Vietnam	516,600	0.60%	Equip Vietnamese Christians in USA to witness online
Cambodia	70,000	0.50%	Difficult, few users, maybe using French…
Bangladesh	500,000	0.30%	Low percentage but large number and they will be leaders
Niger	40,000	0.30%	French-speaking, few Internet users
Tajikestan	19,500	0.30%	Very small base of users
Myanmar	50,000	0.10%	Low percentage, Strict surveillance
North Korea	Data not available	0%	Inaccessible

Conclusions So Far

So we see that there are 20 high-priority nations in the 10/40 Window, where Internet evangelism could be a very useful strategy: China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Pakistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, Egypt, Thailand, Syria, Taiwan, Jordan, Malaysia, Tunisia, Algeria, Mongolia, and Israel. Most of these nations place total or partial restriction on conventional missionary activity among their ethnic majority (for instance Malaysia and Indonesia forbid conversion of Malays and proselytizing of Jews is forbidden in Israel) or they have strict 'anti-blasphemy laws' such as Iran & Pakistan. Japan, while permitting missionary activity has been a 'graveyard' for conventional missions. However it is open to Cybermissions see: www.internetevangelismday.com/japan-web-evangelism.php

These 20 countries contain respectively well over two-thirds of the world's non-Christians. Six major trade languages will be most useful in reaching these nations; English, Arabic, Russian, Chinese, Japanese and Bahasa Indonesia.

English language Internet evangelism will have some impact in Malaysia, Pakistan, India and Israel and to a lesser extent in Japan. Arabic language Internet evangelism will help reach Israeli Arabs, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Tunisia, Egypt , Syria and Algeria. Russian IE will reach Russia, Uzbekistan and Mongolia as well as Russian-speakers in the ex-Soviet Union. The Chinese language will reach China, Taiwan, and a significant percentage of Malaysia and Indonesia as well as the huge Chinese Diaspora. Bahasa Indonesia is spoken by 300 million Indonesians and is understood (in a slightly different dialect) across Malaysia. Japanese will reach the hundreds of millions of high-tech Japanese.

Finally French is a good candidate for a seventh language as it will reach French-speaking colonies in Africa (such as Mali) or in Asia (such as Vietnam) – most of these French speaking nations are in the 'marginal' IE list (marked in brown above)

Of course we will need a lot more than these seven major 'trade languages'! We will also need Farsi, Urdu, Hindi, Thai, Hebrew and Turkish at least. Most of these languages will require special characters known as Unicode or UTF-8; happily this is becoming increasingly easy these days.

Teams using these languages can be located anywhere in the world, e.g. here in Los Angeles. In fact most large churches would have people in the congregation who are fluent native speakers of these major languages and who are looking for an opportunity to engage in meaningful ministry of some sort.

Some Caveats

These statistics are 'at the 36,000 foot level' and do not go down to specific regional levels or to people group levels. And some significant realities are missed. For instance Afghanistan has a low average Internet penetration at 1.5%, possibly because of its geography. One would estimate that most of its 500,000 users would be in and around Kabul while very few users would be in Taliban-held areas. So Internet evangelism would not be a good strategy for reaching the Taliban! But it might be a great strategy for reaching residents of Kabul!

These statistics are also not exact. Where possible I have used the monthly reports used by Internet World Statistics which are generally based on Nielsen ratings of broadband penetration. Where such statistics have not been available I have used ITU (International Telecommunications Union) statistics for 'numbers of Internet users' in a country. In countries like Sri Lanka where Internet cafes are common, the broadband penetration might be low (it is only 3.7% in Sri Lanka) but the actual number of people who use Internet cafes may be many times that number. You would have to count the Sri Lankan users of email to guess at how many actual users there are.

Despite the above caveats a clear picture is beginning to emerge – that we have at least twenty nations that are high-priority (large harvest / few workers), and most of which place restrictions on conventional missionary activity – but which are open to Internet evangelism and Cybermissions.

The Mobile Platform to the Rescue:

There are 16 highly strategic countries where the penetration of the 'landline Internet' is minimal (the ones highlighted in brown above: Bhutan, Libya, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Yemen, Morocco, Nepal, Iraq, Somali, Mauritania, Mali, Vietnam, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Niger, and Tajikistan However digital media can still reach a large percentage of people in these nations via the cellphone, here are some statistics showing the growth of cellphone usage in Africa:

Figure 1: Africa – Mobile Subscribers and Penetration (2002-2012)
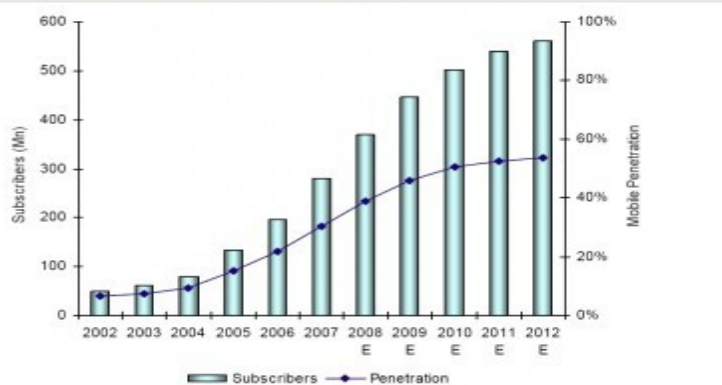
Source: Blycroft Ltd.

The Africa Mobile Fact Book 2008 says that 3G (mobile broadband) networks are becoming increasingly available, even in Africa and will constitute 18.6% of mobile phone subscribers by 2011. What is true in Africa is even more so in Asia – Hong Kong has a cellphone adoption rate of 163% and even Bangladesh is seeing a 67% year on year growth in cellphone adoption adding 34.3 million new subscribers in 2008!

Dave Hackett's mobile evangelism wiki: http://mobilev.pbworks.com/ has a good list of all the various approaches to using mobile phones for digital evaneglism including SMS messaging, short video clips, MP3 files, ebooks, mobile-friendly websites and so on. Tony Whittaker's Web Evangelism Day site also has a great section on mobile evangelism at: www.internetevangelismday.com/mobile-outreach.php

The cellphone is also a highly persuasive and personal delivery platform and Profesor B.J. Fogg of Stanford's Persuasive Technology Laboratory has said that the mobile phone is the most persuasive of all current technologies and that we are more likely to read SMS messages than email or 'snail mail' (conventional mail via the letterbox). Given that the mobile phone is ubiquitous among those we are most trying to reach, and has a high potential for persuasion and influence of the culture, it should be among the first tools adopted by prospective digital evangelists.

Cellphones have some major hurdles though among them – small screen real estate, multiple incompatible operating systems, and the often painful task of converting pervious web content so that it works properly in the mobile world.

The Netbooks

Then along came the netbook! In particular the tablet PC /netbook combination is starting to take off globally and prices are dropping fast - from around $250 - $400, the price of a good cellphone.

The netbook is a basic affordable personal computer capable of web browsing, word-processing and basic office functions.

The netbook can access 3G networks with a plug in module, and has standard wireless and LAN connectivity. They do not have the processing power to run Vista and so tend to run either Linux or Windows XP.

Netbooks use the 'conventional Internet' which makes content delivery much easier than writing specific code for the multitudes of different mobile phone operating systems (iPhone, Google Android, Symbian (Nokia), Palm Os, RIM (Blackberry), Windows Mobile, and Linux) .

The following quote based on data from research firm IDC shows netbooks are rapidly invading the space for conventional laptops and mobile platforms:

In Q4 2008, 3.6 million units were sold which represents 20 percent of total laptop sales and 30 percent of consumer laptops sold during that period. In other words, the netbook market is worth nearly two third of the business laptop market in terms of units sold. Netbooks (or as IDC calls them mini notebooks) have been one of the most sought-after items in Christmas season last year and represented more than four fifths of the sales volumes in Western Europe.

My personal observation is that the netbook has taken off among middle-class Asians and that the two device model (netbook and cellphone) will be with us for some time. Netbooks also often come equipped with Linux which is the operating system of choice in some African nations.

It is too early to tell whether the netbook will be adopted at a fast enough rate to be a major platform for reaching the nations via digital evangelism. My guess is that unless cellphones get much easier to use (and to develop for) that people will vastly prefer to browse the web and do their work on a netbook than on even the coolest 3G cellphone.

Netbooks also have the potential to be a major educational tool (such as the One Laptop Per Child project) with a vast penetration of the youth market which is often the easiest to evangelize via media. Low-priced netbooks also increase the economic viability of Internet cafes, which are major point of information delivery in the developing world.

Between netbooks and 3G cellphones in Africa and Asia we will see a rapid growth in the numbers of people coming online between now and 2012. The Internet may well grow from the current 1.6 billion users to double in size to 3.2.

To do this we need to overcome a limited and dated view of evangelism - that says that you just present the gospel online (the 4 Points, or whatever) - rather than using all sorts of culturally relevant 'bridge strategies' to drill down to where the non-seeking non-Christians are. There is a desperate need for highly contextualized online ministry.

Where We Go From Here?

We train the nations to reach the nations using digital evangelism, with an initial emphasis on the twenty countries and seven main trade languages mentioned earlier. We raise up the Chinese to reach China, the Indians to reach India, the Arab Christians to reach the Arab world and the Indonesian Christians to use computers and the Internet to facilitate the Great Commission among the islands of Indonesia.

We do so prayerfully and carefully, with proper regard to both the spiritual dimension and the need for proper cyber-security – because we are in an End Times battle zone in which our technology is only a tool and where the power is from God.
Finally we pay great attention to issues of contextualization so that the message is communicated with optimal relevance to each culture in cyberspace, without undue confusion. We move under the wise guidance of the Holy Spirit to reach the least reached with the gospel using computers, mobile phones, netbooks, radio and various forms of digital media – all for the glory of God!

The Edges of Cyberspace
And How To Share Christ There…

The Traditional Internet Has Peak
- The traditional Internet = desktop PC + landline (or cable) in a home or workplace
- The number of traditional Internet subscribers is now very close to the number of landlines
- Landline growth has stalled.

Internet users per 100 inhabitants

Source: International Telecommunication Union
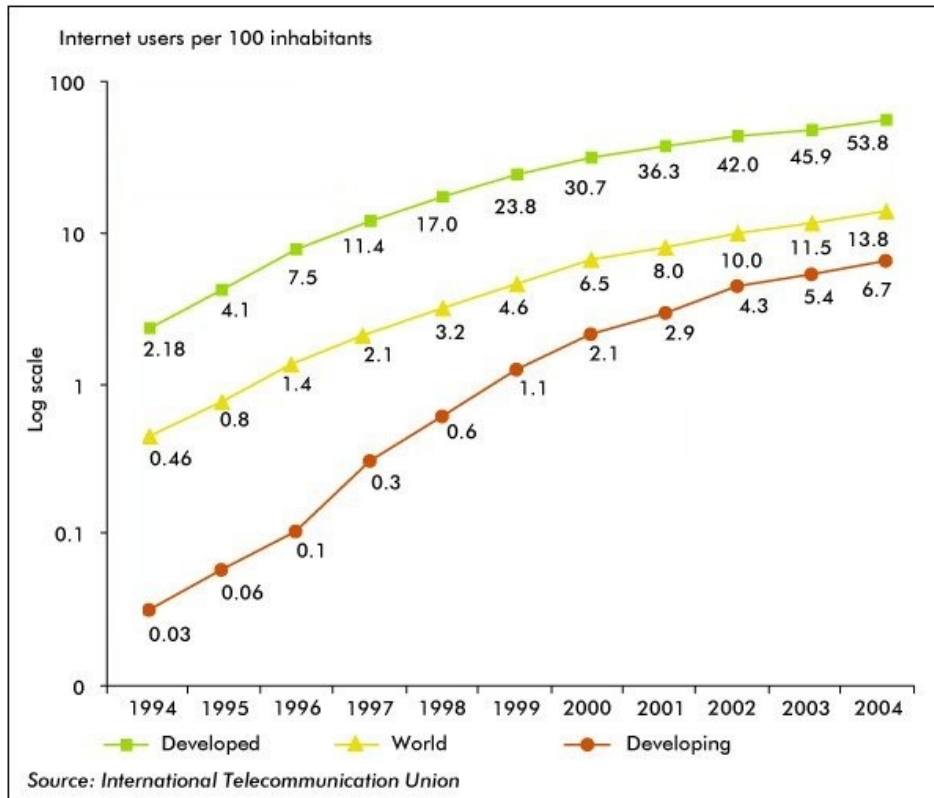
Growing the Edges

- Now the logistical task is to get Internet access to people who do not have landline or cable and who may be earning $500 a month or less
- The spiritual task is to share the gospel with these new users 'on the edge of cyberspace'.
- Many of these are in developing nations such as China, India and the Middle East – where gospel proclamation is most needed
- The 'next billion' will come online in the next two to three years and the Internet will DOUBLE in size!!!

Things May Be Different

- The next billion Internet users will not be Westerners

- The next billion Internet users will not have computers connected to landlines
- They will not speak English as their first language
- Most of them will not come from Christian religious backgrounds
- The God they seek may be very different from what we expect…
- First let's look at the technology they will be using…..

Stages of the Internet

- Pre-1993 – Bulletin boards, email
- 1994-1997 Early HTML
- 1997-2002 HTML plus widgets
- 2002 - 2005 Web 2.0
- 2005 – 2007 Death of Web 2.0, emergence of the media driven web
- 2007 -2010 - The mobile Internet & the developing world Internet

The Mobile Internet

- In July 2007 global mobile phone subscribers surpassed the 3 billion mark…. 3.25 billion by year's end…
- Soon many of these phones will be Internet capable – but will offer a different 'kind' of Internet – how can we reach them?
- In Japan, Korea and China mobile users regularly access the Internet
- **Google's CEO Eric Schmidt, says the future of the internet is mobile.**

Larger and More Flexible Screen

- Mobile screen technology is rapidly advancing
- A 7" x 5" mobile screen that rolls out was recently announced
- Large flexible screens that roll out (like a bible scroll)
- Some are like 'bricks' that click together to form a larger screen (Brix phone illustration)

Starting in Mobile Flat-form Ev.

- www.gotzapp.com - make your own mobile presentation using free (and easy to use) downloadable Zirada software
- http://ied.gospelcom.net/mobile-outreach.php - the mobile evangelism page on the Internet Evangelism Day website
- http://mobilev.pbwiki.com/FrontPage
  MobileEV - a mobile evangelism wiki
- http://mobileministrymagazine.com/
  Mobile Ministry Magazine
- http://christianmobiletech.net/
  Christian Mobile Tech

SMS

- In the Muslim world SMS messages are the PREFERRED method of responding to the gospel
- Text 2 Email gateways are now becoming a critical part of evangelism!
- Soon crusades will have a number you can text to indicate a decision to follow Jesus.

- A URL for follow-up can be sent by return SMS
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMS_gateways

Podcast and Audio Blogging

- http://ied.gospelcom.net/podcasting.php - outreach potential of podcasting
- www.itunes.com/podcasts/ - iTunes podcast directory
- http://www.podcastalley.com/ - Podcast Alley - thousands of podcasts...
- http://www.christiantuner.com/ - ChristianTuner.com - Christian Internet radio stations
- Short audio clips (under ten minutes, preferably under 3 minutes) can be a powerful witness
- Audio is personal and persuasive
- Audio better than video in low bandwidth areas.
- Can be streamed as Internet radio
- Testimonies, gospel presentations, music, prayers etc.

WebTV

- Short videos
- YouTube popularized it
- GodTV – Christian version: http://us.god.tv/
- www.blogtv.com Blog TV
- www.videochurch.org Video Church
- Has great evangelistic potential if done really well.
- Bandwidth limitations

RSS Feed

- RSS is Really Simple Syndication and is slowly changing the Internet from a 'pull' medium driven by search engines to a 'push' medium driven by RSS subscriptions
- RSS plus mobile devices
- RSS plus podcasts and video pods
- RSS plus news feeds, weather info etc
- Evangelistic content needs to be linked to an RSS feed

Second Life / Virtual Worlds

- Virtual worlds are rapidly growing
- Second Life has gone from 1 million subscribers to 10 million subscribers in just over 12 months.
- ***Internet is now participative and experiential not just informational***
- Churches in Second Life

Internet Cafes

- Internet cafes can be found in most cities in the developing world
- They are and will continue to be a main source of the Internet for many
- They often have restricted bandwidth
- How can we reach their users for Jesus?

Extreme Locations

- VHF store and forward (single-side band COBAN radios)
- Stored Internet (on a local area network) plus email, as hard-drives approach 1TB storage capacity this becomes quite feasible
- Satellite and microwave links
- Technological advances are allowing detection of weaker signals and increased range

WiMax

- WiMax is **W**orldwide **I**nteroperability for **M**icrowave **Acc**ess
- Crudely put it is a long-range version of WiFi
- It can use both licensed and unlicensed spectrum
- WiMax towers are becoming popular in developing nations

Meraki Routers

- Meraki routers are powerful wireless routers that can 'mesh' together to cover a large area.
- One access point, plus a bunch of Meraki routers can blanket a whole village with WiFI
- The routers cover 100-250 meter radius each (compared to 10-30 meters for a normal router)
- They are weatherproof

Say Goodbye to Privacy

- The Internet is being watched
- Keystroke loggers
- Splitting of fibre-optic cables
- Download monitoring
- Rapid 'reading' and storing of website content by computers
- Any mention of politics or local organizing will get you instantly banned in over a dozen countries
- Wisdom is essential

The Next Billion Internet Users

- Average income will be $2000 - $5000 a year
- Many will live in urban slums and be using Internet cafes
- They will want HOPE
- They will want practical information as well as entertainment
- About 20 major languages will cover 95% of them….

The Next Billion – Logistics

- They have cell phones and TVs but not cars or computers or telephone lines
- The Internet will be on a cell phone or icafe
- They will probably want an SMS response
- They will be highly family centered and 80% will be under 30
- Many will NOT be very postmodern
- Many will be single

The Next Billion – Aspirational

- They will be highly aspirational & tech hungry
- Want employment and business opportunities (business as mission)
- Online business plans and online business mentoring as ministry?
- Online Christian franchises and micro-franchises and micro-finance?

The Next Billion – Holistic

- Holistic approach to life and ministry
- Want to know 'how to' do a wide range of community development tasks as part of ministry
- HIV / AIDS Education
- Water purification
- Simple church construction
- How to set up a Christian pre-school

The Next Billion – Independent

- Proud of their own culture and own way of doing things
- Will not appreciate our denominations, "Christian culture" or national politics
- Want equal partnership (not Western ownership)
- Want to make the on-the-ground decisions
- Have alternative church structures

The Next Billion – Ministry

- House church movements
- Will often be Pentecostal Christians
- Seekers from animistic backgrounds who need deliverance
- Extended families
- Shame based cultures
- Converts from Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism
- Pastors with little formal training needing mentoring
- Prosperity teaching very popular
- Questions about corruption, poverty, and injustice: 'why are we so poor'

Coping – Technology

- Interactive
- Participative
- Experiential
- Non-computer based (cellphones!!)
- Non-literate – verbal / audio
- Brief & Compressed
- Holistic
- Tagged / RSS
- Multiple languages & cultures
- Multiple bandwidth versions

Coping – Design

- Internationalize
- Clarity
- Reduce idomatic expressions
- Be hopeful and aspirational
- Explain, explain, explain…
- We will have on billion 'newbies' online within the next three years!
- It will be the total re-birth of the Internet and of web page design
- Offer a helpful handshake to the new Netizens…

Coping – Attitude

- Scripture rather than culture
- Spirit rather than method
- Compassion rather than just content
- Trustful connection rather than just 'customer service'
- 'Come into our community' rather than just 'pray the prayer and go away please'
- Engaged with the whole of life rather than cerebral, engaged with a 'bunch of concepts'

Coping – Love Newbies

- If the user is made to feel dumb they just go away
- If their problems are ignored they will resent you
- But if people feel they are helped quickly they will become loyal
- If the user feels empowered they build enthusiasm
- If a user feels ''hey I am cool I can do this' they build pride and tell others

Coping – WWJD

- What would Jesus do?
- Sure these changes are hard but how many people will they help us reach?
- But I like the Internet the way it is!!
- Why can't they just be like us?
- This is way too complicated?
- Get help
- Build teams
- Let God guide you

Coping – Local Networks

- Develop in-country networks
- Cultivate local leaders
- Pay for translation, use locals, use the translation process to build relationships
- Give people an aspirational career pathway within your ministry
- Volunteer – Senior Volunteer – Part-Time Paid – Full-Time Paid
- Delegate real authority and the right to contextualize your ministry

Coping – Be First to Market

- Be first to 'market' – be one of the first in a particular language group
- This gives you great prestige and influence
- It also introduces you to early adopters and to leaders in that culture
- Partner with missions agencies and churches overseas

Coping – Calling Home

- There are huge international connections between migrants working overseas and their home communities
- They 'call home' for news and in return can share the gospel
- The next billion Internet users will have friends and relatives in America
- We can recruit these people as volunteers
- Ethne To Ethne – those people with the gospel reaching those without the gospel - via the Internet

Coping – Partnering

- Sharing translation resources
- Sharing follow-up systems
- Sharing strategic information on people groups
- Sharing good podcasts and other content
- Partnering for on-the-ground church planting and holistic ministry efforts resulting from cyber-ministry

Coping – Prayer

- The next billion will be a spiritual warfare context
- Ministering to animists, Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists will require much prayer and intercession
- Your computer will break down if you don't pray!
- You will break down if you don't pray!

Conclusion

- The Internet will double in the next three years as cellphones become Internet capable
- The next billion users will be 'newbies' from the developing world
- These are people for whom Christ died and that missionaries long to reach
- If you get on board early you can be part of completing the Great Commission

Cybermissions – Where to Start?

The following forty-three nations may represent good opportunities for cyber-missions as a main mission strategy because:

1. They are **hard to reach** by conventional means because of remoteness, war, kidnapping, or because of prohibitions on evangelism.

2. They have **sufficient Internet access** to permit the development of a church-planting movement. Only a few thousand users are needed if the tunnel and blast strategy is used of "tunneling in" to find "man of peace" online then supplying that person with information about Christ and working through training and equipping that person to start a church-planting movement which becomes the 'blast" of the gospel.

3. Note - A few easy to reach nations are included because they have a very high ratio of internet users to general population and other efforts at mission have not succeeded that well (e.g. Israel, Thailand, Japan)

4. China has 45.8 million internet users and is a huge harvest-field just waiting to happen. If you are a Chinese church in the West please consider forming a cyber-mission team with half a dozen young people under the general supervision of the pastor.

5. Other excellent starting points include: India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Vietnam, Turkey, Russia, Japan, Oman, Cuba, Thailand and Bahrain, Egypt, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Saudi Arabia.

6. See also articles that will help you understand some of the setting up, ideas and techniques in cybermissions and Tony Whittaker's excellent web evangelism guide

7. PRAY for God's guidance as to where to start.

8. Then go to our mission links site and do some research on your chosen nation at any of the mission portal sites listed there e.g strategicnetwork.org.

9. Then make a start! Get going, try anything! Start sharing the gospel and be open to the Holy Spirit's leading as you go along. Learn by doing!

10. If you need web space try YourChristianWebHost which hosts the AIBI and has given us reliable affordable service for years.

Table Of The Most Strategic Nations For Cybermissions

Nation	Population (millions)	Number with Internet access (thousands)	Comment
1. Azerbaijan	7.8	25	Islamic
2. Bahrain	0.656	140	Islamic
3. Bangladesh	133.3	150	Islamic
4. Belarus	10.44	422	Partly Islamic, kidnapping
5. Bhutan	2.1	2.5	Buddhist, closed
6. Brunei	0.35	35	Islamic
7. Burma	42	10	Buddhist, closed
8. China	1,300	45,800	Communist, huge potential for cybermissions
9. Cuba	11.2	120	Communist
10. Djibouti	0.472	3.3	Islamic
11. Egypt	70.7	600	Islamic
12. Georgia	4.96	25	Partly Islamic, unstable
13. India	1000	7000	Hindu - potential
14. Indonesia	231	4,400	Islamic
15. Iran	66.6	420	Islamic
16. Iraq	24	12.5	Islamic
17. Israel	6.0	1,900	Jewish, restricts evangelism
18. Japan	127	56,000	Buddhist, Shinto
19. Jordan	5.3	212	Islamic
20. Kazakhstan	16.7	100	Islamic
21. Kyrgyzstan	4.8	51.6	Islamic
22. Libya	5.2	7.5	Islamic
23. Malaysia	22.6	5,700	Islamic
24. Mali	11.34	30	Islamic
25. Mongolia	2.7	40	Communist & Islamic
26. Nepal	25.87	60	Hindu
27. Niger	10.6	12	Islamic
28. Oman	2.7	120	Islamic
29. Pakistan	147.6	1,200	Islamic
30. Qatar	0.793	75	Islamic
31. Russia	145	18,000	Restricts evangelism
32. Saudi Arabia	23.5	570	Islamic
33. Senegal	10.589	100	Islamic
34. Sudan	37	56	Islamic
35. Syria	17.15	60	Islamic
36. Tajikistan	6.7	5	Islamic
37. Thailand	61.8	4,600	Buddhist
38. Tunisia	9.81	400	Islamic
39. Turkey	67.308	2,500	Islamic
40. Turkmenistan	4.6	2	Islamic
41. Uzbekistan	25.563	100	Islamic
42. Vietnam	81.098	400	Communist/Buddhist
43. Yemen	18.7	17	Islamic

How a Local Church Can Have A Global Presence Through Cybermissions

Summary: *How your church can have a volunteer team of cyber-missionaries that can minister cross-culturally to unreached peoples at a total cost of between $1000 to $5000 a year and see between 100 and 1100 decisions for Christ in that people group.*

Cybermissions - is the front-line use of the Internet for cross-cultural evangelism, discipleship, church-planting and training.

Some Statistics

Worldwide Internet Population:
445.9 million (eMarketer)
533 million (Computer Industry Almanac)

Projection for 2004:
709.1 million (eMarketer)
945 million (Computer Industry Almanac)
Online Language Populations (September 2002)
English 36.5%; Chinese 10.9%, Japanese 9.7%, Spanish 7.2%, German 6.7%, Korean 4.5%, Italian 3.8%, French 3.5%, Portuguese 3.0%, Russian 2.9%, Dutch 2.0% (Source: Global Reach)

From the above statistics it is clear that the Internet is no longer predominantly an English speaking medium and that Asian languages such as Chinese, Japanese and Korean now occupy a significant portion of cyber-space along with major European languages such as Spanish., Portuguese and French.

There are over 275 million Internet searches each day and 80% of all Internet sessions begin at a search engine (Internetstatistics.com). Religion is one of the main topics people search for. Pew Internet surveys found that 28 million Americans get religion information online, that three million do so daily, and that 25 % of net users search for religion-related topics. Barna Research estimates that up to 50 million Americans may worship solely over the Internet by 2010. There is every indication that the Internet is a major source of religious information where people of many cultures and languages collect their spiritual facts and opinions in private. Thus it's a place where missionaries must be.

What Is The Role Of A Local Church?

Local churches can create a Cybermissions Project Team (CPT) that uses the church website, chat rooms and email to reach a specific ethnic group for Christ. A well-run cybermissions website can see three people a day or about 1100 people a year make commitments to Jesus as Lord and Savior.

This is because the website is a "perpetual evangelist" that works away 24/7 witnessing to seekers about Christ. The Internet is seeker-driven. People using the Internet are seeking information via search engines and links on other sites. When people arrive at your website it's not an accident. They have typed a query into a search engine and arrived there. People not

interested in God simply don't arrive at your church website – they end up somewhere else, reading the weather or the news. So virtually 100% of the people you minister to will already have some level of interest. This makes evangelism so much easier! You can witness, via the Internet 24/7 to people who are already interested in finding out about God!

OK... how do I start?

1. **Form a small group** of say 6 to 8 people which should include a few "techie" computer types, a few "bible" types and someone with enthusiasm for missions. The pastor does not need to lead the group, he/she can just give it some guidelines and get a monthly report. The group should be led by someone with a passion for missions on the Internet. The group can fit into the church structure in a similar way to creative ministry teams.

2. **Read the articles** on cybermissions at http://www.aibi.ph/missions/ for some ideas to get you started.

3. **Get some web space**. You need a domain name "yourchurch.com" and some space on a server. We use ChristianWebHost.com and have found them to be both affordable and reliable.

4. **Pray about what people group** you should be ministering to. For a list of the 43 nations most suitable for a cybermissions strategy click here. Then go to our mission links site and do some research on your chosen nation at any of the mission portal sites listed there e.g strategicnetwork.org.

5. **Decide on an initial strategy** (you can tweak it later) and start designing the website. Use the articles in point 2 above for some ideas.

6. **Spend at least four hours a week** working on the website and improving it.

7. **Reply to the emails** that come in promptly and start ministering to people in your target group.

8. **Become a member** of Cybermissions.Org and hang out with other people doing the same thing - *it's free.* (Cybermissions.Org will open officially on 12th August 2003 as a web portal for cybermissionaries.)

How Much Does Running A Cybermissions Project Team Cost?

You will probably pay around $19.95 a year for the domain name.

Then around $10 a month for reliable ad-free hosting and $29.95 a month for broadband access at your home or church office. ($480 per annum)

Then work on replacing a computer every two years so - $1000 p.a.

Then maybe you want some expensive software - $1500 a year

And you do some online advertising at $150 a month - $1800

Total costs = $4800 per annum. Or around $5000 per annum for a well-equipped active evangelistic outreach that may well bring between 100 to 1100 people to Christ.

On A Shoe-String Budget?

You can start for $ 1000 per annum, $500 for the basics, (website, domain name, broadband) and $500 for extras. For good free open-source software go to http://www.sourceforge.net

What Sort Of Things Can The CPT Do?

- Share testimonies in the target group's language.
- Have a chat room/bulletin board
- Have a pen-pals page
- Have a "pray for healing" page so they can ask the church to pray for sick relatives.
- Have cross-over articles say on an area of secular interest (say camel-racing if you want to reach Saudi Arabia) then tag a short Christian message at the end or a link to an evangelistic page.
- Address the spiritual questions they have: demon-possession, sacrifices to idols, magic, how to endure suffering, who is really God, etc
- Online artwork that is culturally appropriate.
- Christian songs in their national language.
- Recipes for the favorite foods of the target people group.
- Have a "personal advice" column and articles on family life, relationships, loneliness etc.
- Share bible portions, tracts and brief evangelistic sermons.
- Have news and weather of that country.
- Have a membership section so they keep coming back.

Online-Offline Synergies That Dramatically Increase Evangelistic Effectiveness

Online-offline synergy is when "offline" activities such as an outreach or a crusade are closely coordinated with a website or vice-versa. It is the intentional connecting of the online and offline worlds. It is the nexus between physical incarnation and "presence" - and information and explanation and community and forums online.

In the Philippines a Catholic charismatic ministry sends worship teams into Catholic schools - where they are often restricted from teaching about being born-again. But the worship team of fun young people heavily promotes their "Genrev" website and it is there that the kids convert to Christ are followed up in the forums and eventually come to the Tuesday night meeting. With 2 million hits a month and hundreds of conversions it is a great example of online-offline synergy.

Joepix is a major event outreach that send photographers around to do group photos for free. The photos are put on a website and the people in the photo are given a key they can use to log on - and invite friends to the website. The website presents the gospel. Non-Christians and inviting other non-Christians to a Christian website to view their photos!

It's tough to present the gospel in some Catholic schools, and nearly impossible to get it through in a five-minute photo shoot without looking really weird. The ministries above build the RELATIONSHIP off-line - and deliver the INFORMATION online.

Let's play this out a bit more, say your church sends 45 young people in a bus to Mexico for a 3 day outreach. They have a great time, make many friends and come home excited and sad. It wasn't really long enough for effective ministry - or was it?

- What if they were encouraged to make email pen-pals?
- Or gave out literature to a Spanish language Christian website?
- What if the church got some of its Hispanic members to have an evangelistic web page in Spanish with photos of the weekend and lots of friendly faces?
- Or if there were forums using PHPBB2 or similar software to answer questions?
- Or even just a blog about the weekend?

The possibilities are endless and the Mexican young people can go into a nearby Internet cafe and keep in touch with their American friends and get their questions answered about being born-again. The new converts could be effectively followed up and the seekers led to the Lord. The spiritual results could be doubled!

The Introduction is made "offline", the gospel or other Information is presented "online" and questions are answered in cyberspace and relationship are built, then the Invitation happens as the website advertises another event, and finally Inclusion happens as they become part of both the online and offline communities. Then more Introductions are made and so on...

1. **Introduction** - offline -outreach event
2. **Information** - online - website /forums, gospel presentation, questions answered
3. **Invitation** - online - invited to another event, church service etc.
4. **Inclusion** - both offline and online - becomes part of the community
5. **Introduction** - new members in turn introduce others...and around it goes

A common mistake is to expect the website to do the initial introduction. People don't trust the internet enough for that yet. In the main they still need a smiling face. The gospel still has to be incarnated in flesh and blood. However people are very happy to find information online or be an email pen-pal with someone they already know from the real world. So do the introduction and initial relationship building offline, and leave presenting the information to the website. This also takes a lot of the pressure off the relationship.

EXPANDING THE CONCEPT

Now you have the idea - visit these websites:
(HINT: Use the BACK button on your web browser to return to this page after you have read each of the following links)

A great article by my friend Tony Whittaker: Twintrack websites
The synergy/co-operativity/symbiotic effect

Tony also has an article on using websites to back up local outreach teams.

StrategicDigitalOutreach.com also has some good material on local area websites

Genrev.Net - the Catholic renewal ministry in the Philippines mentioned above.

JoePix - the photography ministry mentioned above.

POINTS TO PONDER:

1. How can you build relationships offline that lead to information online?

2. How can you build a website to back-up an outreach effort?

3. How can you use the Internet to answer common questions that arise during face-to-face ministry?

4. How can a website help do the evangelizing for you?

Paul vs. John – Information Security Then and Now
(Why Paul Got More Press But John Lived Longer)

Differing approaches to missionary security go back as least as far as the New Testament. On one hand we have Paul, whose incredible boldness caused concern to others and who had to be rescued from rioting mobs on numerous occasions. Paul attaches long lists of names to his epistles, freely discloses his travel plans and is 'completely out in the open' as far as information security goes. He even goes to Jerusalem despite the warnings of close friends, prophets such as Agabus - and to the obvious discomfort of James and the brethren. For Paul security was simply not a major concern.

On the other hand we have the apostle John. His brother James is beheaded by Herod (Acts 12:1,2); next, his good friend Peter is arrested and put in jail, awaiting execution. At this point John is the only 'free' member of the three apostles who were closest with Jesus (Peter, James and John), and so John 'vanishes' from the record of Acts, and even from the greetings at the end of Paul's epistles - which is rather strange considering both men ministered in Ephesus! For forty-five years or so we hear nothing of John until his gospel, epistles and Revelation appear in the eighties and nineties AD. And when they do appear they are coded and cryptic, they do not have long lists of names and personal greetings nor do they give detailed travel plans. They say things such as: 3 John 1:13-14 MKJV *I had many things to write, but I will not write to you with pen and ink, (14) but I trust I shall shortly see you, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.*

John seems to have been much more security conscious than Paul – and yet both were undeniably apostles and very great men of God who helped shaped both the Scriptures and the Church. As one wit remarked when I pointed this out, 'Paul got more press, but John lived longer!'

Undoubtedly personality, theology and temperament had a lot to do with their approaches, but the type of persecution each faced was significantly different. Paul's early experiences of persecution were from bands of Jewish agitators who had limited ability to intercept his letters to the churches. There is no N.T. record of systematic, government-level persecution of Paul (who seems to have easily made friends with Roman officials).

For Paul, standing up to the agitators who were trying to silence both him and the gospel was the correct thing to do. Paul also had the context of being single (1 Cor 7:8) and thus did not have to consider protecting his family.

In contrast, John's experience of persecution was at a government level – first the insane Herod, and later the persecution of Diocletian where any misspoken phrase or loose scrap of paper could lead to someone being burned alive. For John, keeping the Church safe from inadvertent catastrophe was the priority. John was also probably married (1 Cor 9:5), and that would have been a contributing factor to his security-consciousness. Both approaches to security are found in missions work today –sometimes in the same organization, and this can result in some very significant tensions.

This may be going a bit far, but I think the very different approaches that Paul and John had to information security largely prevented their networks from working together, even when in the same city (such as Ephesus). John's network leaders would simply have felt unsafe around

Paul and his disciples. While they would have preached the same Christ, they would have had different leadership structures, different house churches and baptism policies (Paul baptized on the spot, but there is much evidence that in other areas there was a long testing period to weed out false disciples first) and different methods of operation. In time Paul's networks combined with Peter's and coalesced into the Western or Roman church, while John's network remained distinct and became the Orthodox Church of today.

Differing approaches to security may also have been part of the reason for the historic WEC/UFM split towards the end of the life of missionary pioneer C.T. Studd. Even today there are tensions both within and between agencies. Trust is broken easily and takes a long time to build. A head office wire transfer containing too much detail e.g. 'for Bibles' can alienate the field staff whom it impacts. And a single foolish mistake by an unwise youth on a short-term missions trip can result in that whole agency being 'blacklisted' by other agencies working in the same country.

In the rest of this article I will focus on 'information security' – that is, how we separate out the information we keep secure from that which we keep out in the open for all the world to see. And I will also ask the question: "How do we create a culture of caring about the consequences of communication?" Because, as the WW2 poster used to say, "Loose lips sink ships.'

What Is Information Security?

Information security, computer security and information assurance are closely related but different terms.

Information security is wider than computer security and deals with information as a whole and so may concern something written by hand or even oral communication. Information security will include the terms and language you use, as well as all the communication media – landlines, mobile phones, Skype, laptops, PCs and various hand-held devices.

Information security experts use terms such as confidentiality, integrity, authenticity, possession, utility and availability of information. I will boil all this down to *the identification, separation and preservation of confidential information that could potentially compromise your ministry.* Identification means you have policies that help people accurately identify what is confidential (finances and specifics such as names, places, and meeting venues) and what is not confidential (general publicly available information about your agency). Confidential information is any specific, real-time information (in contrast to general statements) that can form a basis for action by an enemy.

Separation means you wall the information off so that (supposedly) only those who should see it, do see it. A safe or an encrypted hard drive is a simple form of such separation as is a locked file cabinet or an old briefcase used just for confidential papers. Preservation means that the information is kept intact and can be retrieved in an intelligible format. This includes such things as backups, decryption keys, virus-scanning to prevent data corruption, and checking of physical media to ensure that data is not scrambled.

What Missions Are Currently Doing In This Area

I did some research into this issue in the form of an online survey that was answered by 62 people (full survey analysis available upon request). In brief, the most security conscious were listed as being: a) Western missionaries, b) the IT staff and c) those in creative access

ministries. Those who were least security conscious were listed as being: a) older missionaries, b) head office bureaucrats, c)those who preferred to 'just trust the Lord', d) those whose work computer was also their home computer, e) supporters back home, f) partner ministries that use inappropriate stories in publications and g) some national missionaries.

Many of the responses indicated a high level of emotion among many of the survey participants with some 'us vs. them' polarization occurring between the most security conscious and least security conscious groups due to their differing age, as well as their cultural and theological perspectives. People reported anger and confusion around the implementation of information security policies and people divided between 'we trust God and pray' and those who want absolutely every possible security contingency covered (which is not practicable).

The following question was asked about the kind of security policies that were in place: *Do you have specific policies for security in regard to: (tick all that apply) (Statistics were only taken from completed responses)*

Email - 71%
Viruses, malware, phishing, scams - 58%
Server network security - 50%
Web browsing - 47%
Laptop security -42%
Use of Internet cafes - 37%
Hard-drive encryption - 26%
USB / Thumb drives - 26%
Other - please specify - 24%
I have no idea of what policies we may or may not have - 16%
We do not have any information security policies - 11%

I found it remarkable that over a quarter (27%) either had no information security policies or had no idea of what such security policies were. Email, viruses and server security seem to be the main concern of the security policies that did exist.

Covenanting To Keep Each Other Safe

Because of the Internet, links between missionaries in different agencies are now very extensive, and missionaries in an agency with good security practices may be compromised by a missionary in another agency with very poor security practices. Security is only as good as the weakest link, and the weakest link is often in the publicity department at mission HQ! The dramatic stories that are good for fund-raising are also the material that can cause serious problems on the field. We have to covenant to keep one another safe.

At a recent large missions gathering in Thailand, the story was told of people visiting a certain closed country on a short-term missions trip, who were expressly told not to hand out tracts. On the way home one woman felt it was her duty to start throwing tracts out the bus window. They were soon arrested and taken for interrogation by the secret police. Within twenty minutes they were crying on the floor and within thirty minutes they had divulged the names of the local pastors and Christian leaders.

We have to do better than that! We have to care deeply about those who may be affected by our actions, and that should give us a 'holy restraint' that stops us doing things like throwing

tracts out bus windows in closed countries! That is why I advocate for organization-wide policies that are understood and signed off on by everyone from the board chairman to the bus driver on the short-term mission trip. Detailed information security policies need to be created by each mission organization to suit its own particular requirements. These policies should be contained in a single concise document that should be personally reviewed and signed off on by all staff in each organization, including the leadership.

Of course, everything must be held in balance. There are good missionaries who recognize their lack of understanding, and are trusting the Lord to provide needed protection. They would love to act on the basis of more understanding... yet one thing was stated quite strongly: the basis of our security is Christ, not policy. No policy can be allowed to determine what we will or will not do.

How do we then proceed, given that in many contexts some increase in information security is desirable? First, information security practices might need to be greatly simplified to make them more user friendly. As far as possible, information security should be 'automatic' and built into the software, email systems and server systems used by missionaries. While it is acknowledged that perfect information security is impossible, greater security can be achieved by the thoughtful development of simple yet effective information security processes. Some of these simplified information security practices could include:

BASIC SECURITY (All missionaries everywhere, even in free countries)

1. Using free firewall software such as ZoneAlaram, and free anti-virus software such as AVG or Avira antivirus and free spyware and root-kit detectors such as Spybot Search & Destroy and AdAware – and *regularly updating* them.

2. Use CCleaner to remove cookies, browser history and general compromising 'junk' from your computer.

3. Give some consideration to using a non-Windows operating system such as Apple OSX, Ubuntu Linux, FreeBSD, or OpenSolaris. You can still run your Windows programs by using a 'virtual machine' such as VMWare and they will run quite quickly. These non-Windows operating systems are generally quite secure and are far less targeted by hackers and virus writers.

4. The use of encrypted PDF files (for example PDFCreator for free software that does this easily) to store confidential information - especially when sending attachments. Having to use simple passwords to open files reminds the reader that they are confidential. For further security the ability to print, or to copy, cut or paste can be turned off in a PDF file.

5. Use strong passwords – longer than 12 characters and involving uppercase letters, lower case letters, numbers and punctuation. The more scrambled up the better. For instance get a bible verse and take the numbers and jumble them up between the letters and add some punctuation on the end to get at least 12 characters - so John3:16 might become J3o:h1n6!?@> a much stronger password.

6. Do not get the 'latest and greatest' - wait at least six months until the security issues have been found and patches fixed. For new releases of MS Windows or Microsoft Office, wait one year.

7. The use of the same free / low-cost 'seamless' encrypted email across all members of the organization (it is then as pain-free as sending a normal email).

8. The regular use of Google and other search engines to check what is 'out there' in cyberspace about the ministry - and even to ask people to remove confidential information from a website. It may also be wise to Google for any sensitive email addresses.

9. Training all staff and partners in the difference between what is 'confidential' and what can be shared freely, especially when fund-raising or in newsletters.

10. Merge with your context. For instance, using Linux in Africa or China is fine because it has a strong following in those places but in some other countries it may look 'geeky' and attract attention. Also, selecting unusual hardware or software means that a typical user is a) less likely to understand how it works; b) less likely to have a community of friends who can help them use their technology well; c) more likely to be identified as an "outlier" simply on the basis of the unusual tools they use. It's worth considering the selection of tools that fit in well with those in the neighborhood (whatever that may mean). This applies not only to OS but also to email practices.

11. Stay away from politics in all publications and communications both on-field and at HQ, as it is often a brochure with a strong political statement that alerts a government to commence surveillance of the organization.

12. Do not publish sensitive conversion statistics, particularly of Hindus or Muslims, as this will cause them to defend their religion - by finding and persecuting the converts in that area.

13. Do not keep any confidential information of any sort on servers connected to the Internet.

14. Use a high-quality shredder for all financial and confidential paperwork.

MODERATE SECURITY (Most missionaries in the 10/40 Window, occasional light surveillance)

15. "Need to know' basis for information sharing. This includes yourself. Evaluate whether you really need to know a particular piece of information.

16. Be 'semi-paranoid' and make people earn your trust.

17. Do not use Skype. It has been compromised by most governments.

18. Do not use Internet cafes - not only a high virus infection risk but key-stroke loggers are common and can record everything you type and send it to those watching you.

19. Do secure web browsing using Sandboxie, Green Border or multiple proxy servers.

20. Do not use cellphones in some countries, particularly in police states, as mobile phones can not only be listened in on, but their microphones and cameras can be turned on remotely. Removing the battery is the only safe way to prevent this.

21. A forest is a great place for a sensitive conversation. It is very hard for others to listen undetected, even using wireless electronics (which do not work well in greenery).

22. The use of free software such as TrueCrypt as a way to create encrypted hard-drives or encrypted 'file containers' within hard-drives – and the use of these encrypted partitions for all highly confidential data. It just takes a little practice.

23. Generate as little confidential information as possible. Do not ask for specifics (such as full names addresses, etc) that might compromise people.

24. Keep a low profile, be useful, friendly and non-annoying. Take care with financial transactions so that no one is ever burned or gets a grudge against you (and thus has a motive to betray you).

25. Do not have large, obvious meetings. Do not have all the converts or church leaders in one place at one time (so they can all be arrested at once).

26. Train your memory so that records of appointments and other compromising information does not have to be kept on paper in sensitive situations.

27. Use a "split messages" policy. If you need to share a confidential message, break it apart and send via different paths. You might send one element (e.g. date or location) by email, then make a phone call or fax to send the rest.

28. Appoint someone in your team to be your 'security consultant' who updates computers regularly and who does the necessary nagging that is required to keep people secure.

HIGH SECURITY (Really tough places, extensive government-level surveillance)

29. There are no effective technical counter-measures that a missionary can take to counter determined government surveillance. The missionary must carefully evaluate whether God has called them to such a situation and the risk they may pose to themselves, their family and the national church. Western missionaries can unfortunately draw unwanted attention to those that they meet with in such countries.

30. A wise, consistent respectful, God-honoring lifestyle is generally good security anywhere.

Proposal For A Postgraduate Course
in Cyber-Missions and Internet Evangelism

Proposal: To equip leaders for mission and evangelism in an ever-changing world through a degree program in "Cyber-Missions and Internet Evangelism". With the growth of the Internet and web ministries, the Christian educational establishment needs to provide global-level leadership in this developing area of missiology. Although formal programs exist for communication, radio evangelism, writing, journalism, and media-strategy, no curriculum exists covering this emerging ministry field.

Definitions

Cyber-Missions refers to the front-line use of the Internet in missions – for networking, team-building, counseling and education.

Internet Evangelism is the specific application of the Web for outreach, through evangelistic websites, church pages, chat rooms, and email. It has great potential both in the West and the 10-40 Window. Internet Evangelism is an effective method of reaching unreached people groups in the 10-40 Window, and can also target very specific groups in the Western world.

There two disciplines overlap, and terms may be used interchangeably in this document.

Distance learning?

Although the curriculum outlined here could be taught within a residential establishment, the developments in online education would enable such a course to be offered online, though validated and overseen by a recognized educational center. Advantages:

- Low cost
- Students can be located anywhere in the world
- Course can be self-paced, and studied on a part-time/evening basis
- There are a limited number of qualified practitioners qualified to be the faculty teachers and supervisors for this course, and they are in a range of locations around the world.

Online education has come of age with many of the software, security and pedagogical issues being ironed out over the last two years. Discussion in online forums and the use of email between student and supervisor have proven practical and useful in facilitating graduate degree courses requiring reflection on practice. It is therefore the optimal method of delivery for many subjects. This is especially true for a discipline focused on the online environment and where the participants may be dispersed geographically with many prospective students living internationally.

Prospective Students

Current practitioners in cyber-missions and web-evangelism and those wishing to enter this area, as well as field-missionaries seeking new methods to evangelize and disciple unreached people groups.

Is This A Needed Area Of Study?

Internet evangelism and cyber-missions are rapidly emerging areas of missions. Even though there are relatively few full-time practitioners, Internet ministries are gaining acceptance in the missions community. Cyber-missions departments in major missions organizations are developing. In Web Evangelism, some post-modern churches find most new members coming in through their websites. The Internet has enormous potential for reaching closed countries, for targeting unreached people groups, for training of lay leaders and for evangelizing those who cannot or will not approach a local church. As the potential of this discipline becomes recognized, trained and equipped leaders will be needed, who can in turn train and envision others.

What Is The Size Of The Potential Student Population For This Course?

Formal research does not exist at this time, however this is an emerging area and journal articles on cyber-missions and Internet evangelism have a high level of interest. The concept of such a post-graduate course was considered by some *Internet Evangelism Coalition* leaders recently and generated a high level of enthusiasm.

What Other Courses Such as This Exist?

IEC (*Internet Evangelism Coalition*) and *Campus Crusade* both offer brief non-formal courses. Some courses on post-modernism address the Internet extensively as a cultural medium. However there do not seem to be any regionally-accredited graduate level course designed to equip full-time practitioners and strategists in cyber-missions and Internet evangelism.

Are There Any Text-Books Available?

Many textbooks have been published exploring sociological aspects of the Internet and general evangelistic and missionary communication. Andrew Careaga and others have written on E-vangelism and Tony Whiaker has compiled an online resource web-evangelism.com which includes study questions. Many secular books and online resources cover technical, design, and usability issues.

Who Would Comprise the Faculty?

There are perhaps 50 key people available in this area at the moment with perhaps a dozen of these having suitable doctorates and about the same number with M.Div. / M.A. degrees and extensive online experience. The originator of this course proposal, John Edmiston, is available to be a course administrator, and has contacts with many other potential faculty.

What About The Technical Aspects?

Students could develop an emphasis on content, or on the technological aspects, but all students would be required to know something of both sides of the discipline. Issues such as accessibility, online security, types of websites, the strategic use of web databases, bandwidth limitations and designing with the end-user in mind should be part of the training of all students.

Why Now?

The areas of cyber-missions and Internet evangelism have so far evolved in an ad hoc fashion. Practitioners have now accumulated a sizable body of common practice and knowledge. As this field grows, there is a clear need for formal training and for systematization. Any Christian establishment developing such a course now will have the opportunity to pioneer formal training in an emerging ministry field.

Overheads

Minimal as classes would be online.

Scholarship Fund

Could possibly be funded by tapping into the Christian business and technology community.

Anticipated Course Structure

1. Preferably an entirely online course using adult-learning strategies. Local proctoring of tests by an on-the-spot supervisor can ensure student work integrity. Much of the course will be on a practical project-learning basis.

2. If some residency is required, this may be able to be achieved with regional residency programs.

3. The course would accept both M.Div. and M.S. (and other suitable) graduates. M.Div. graduates would be required to acquire some I.T. competencies and M.S. graduates some theological and missiological understandings.

4. The modules would include topics such as: Research Methodologies, Dissertation Writing, A Theology of Cyber-Space, Ministry-Focused Website Construction, Cross-cultural Communication and Cultural Sensitivity, Online Communication, Approaches To Internet Evangelism, Targeting Special Interest/Affinity Groups by the Bridge Strategy, Website Architecture and Usability, Understanding HTML and CSS, Effective Graphic Design, Content Management, Reaching Members of World Religions, Overview of Cyber-Missions, Database Construction and Management, Virtual Teams, Reaching Post-Moderns Via The Internet, Counseling In Cyber-Space, Website Promotion Strategies, Building Online Community, The Construction and Funding of Christian Community Internet Cafes, Issues in Cyber-Ethics, Catering For Accessibility, Poverty and the Digital Divide, Developing A Cyber-Missions/Internet Evangelism Department In Your Organization, Email/Web Security for Missions.

5. Dissertation – either research-based or project-based.

6. Cyber-Missions dissertations would be expected to have a strong missiological and developing world emphasis.

7. As an online course it could be taught using adjunct faculty within USA and the West.

Implications For Missions/Evangelism As a Whole

Development of an M.A./Ph.D. qualification in this emerging area of missions would help to both validate and systematize the areas of Cyber-Missions and Internet Evangelism. It would produce a group of highly trained leaders who could implement Cyber-Missions departments in mission agencies and Internet Evangelism departments within mega-churches and denominational evangelism divisions. This unleashing of the power of the Internet to serve the Gospel would enable a major leap forward to be made in the achievement of the Great Commission.

Final Thoughts

This paper is a brief overview and a starting point for further discussion and reflection, rather than a final formulation. Its originator, John Edmiston, and other qualified commentators, are very happy to enter into dialogue to develop an optimal course structure.

Socio-Technical Humanity:
Technology As Part Of the Image Of God
And Task Of the Church
(A Christian perspective on how we can integrate technology and spirituality.)
Technology and The Image of God

God is a highly competent technician. He created wing structures, eyes, chemical factories like the liver, lightning bolts and even nuclear furnaces called stars –long before man was there to advise Him. He even created and designed the human brain – a self-replicating, fuzzy logic, multi-media, self-programming, organic computer. If we are to be in the image of God then we will share His excellence in design, invention and implementation. The notion that technology is alien to spirituality is false. Technology is the expression of spirituality. Technology and spirituality are integrated with each other, technology is our means of expression of the image of God within us.

Ezekiel 1:19-21,25-28 BBE (19) And when the living beings went on, the wheels went by their side; and when the living beings were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. (20) Wherever the spirit was to go they went; and the wheels were lifted up by their side: for the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels. (21) When these went on, the others went; and when these came to rest, the others came to rest; and when these were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up by their side: for the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels…… And there was a voice from the expanse which *was* over their heads, in their standing still, and they let down their wings. (26) And from above the expanse that *was* over their heads *was* a likeness like a sapphire stone, the likeness of a throne. And on the likeness of the throne *was* a likeness looking like a man on it from above. (27) And I saw *Him* looking like the color of polished bronze, looking like fire all around within it. From the likeness of His loins even upward, and from the likeness of His loins even downward, I saw *Him*, looking like fire, and it had brightness all around. (28) As the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain looks, so the brightness all around looked. This was how the likeness of the glory of Jehovah looked. And I saw. And I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of One speaking.

In Ezekiel's vision the throne of God is being carried by four living beings on a chariot of fire with four immense wheels. These wheels are directed by the spirit of the living beings "for the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels". This living being-wheels-throne-expanse of crystal arrangement was full of energy and fire. It was a high-powered, mobile, spiritual-technological complex that carried the very Presence and authority of God. Thus God was not separated from technology – but rather was enthroned upon it. And the technology was not separate from the spiritual world – but indwelt by it.

This integration of spiritual indwelling and technical excellence is evident in the first passage in Scripture that tells us about being filled with the Holy Spirit. As Bezalel is filled with God's Spirit the result is technical excellence and fine craftsmanship.

Exodus 31:1-5 ASV And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying, (2) See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: (3) and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, (4) to devise skilful works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, (5) and in cutting of stones for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all manner of workmanship.

The Spirit is often associated with fire - the main symbol of technology and power and His indwelling teaches us and give us wisdom in all things including technology. (1 Corinthians 2:9-16, 1 John 2:20,22) Indeed the prophet Isaiah tells us to pay close attention to God's wisdom and teachings which even include practical details of farming life:

Isaiah 28:23-29 MKJV Give ear and hear my voice; listen, and hear my speech. (24) Does the plowman plow all day to sow? Does he open and break the clods of his ground? (25) When he has made the face of it level, does he not cast out the dill and scatter the cummin, and throw in the choice wheat and the chosen barley and the spelt *in* its border? (26) **For his God instructs him to do right; his God teaches him. (**27) For the dill is not threshed with a threshing instrument, nor is a cart wheel turned on cummin; but the dill is beaten out with a staff and the cummin with a rod. (28) Bread grain is crushed, but not always does one thresh it *with* threshing. And he drives the wheel of his cart; and his horses do not beat it small. (29) This also comes out from Jehovah of Hosts, *who* is wonderful in wisdom, making sound wisdom great.

The point of Isaiah's statement is that God's wisdom is not just some esoteric morality or irrelevant philosophy but covers all of life including farming and the technology needed for earning of our daily bread. God's wisdom penetrates into all the details of everyday life – including showing the farmer the best way to thresh cummin.

Jesus – who is always our model, was a carpenter – a user of tools and technology (Mark 6:3). He was not an ascetic philosopher who just read books and taught. He was not 'so spiritual' that He floated around unable to fix a light bulb or wash dishes. The image of God in Christ, the perfect image was of a practical tool-using man. ***For Jesus, who is the very image of God, there was no split between spirituality and technology***. Peter, James and John were fishermen, Paul was a tent-maker, they were all people who used technology. The Christian model does not involve a retreat from technology. Christianity sees practicality as a positive human attribute. Technical excellence is desirable and is part of the wisdom God imparts and part of being fully in the image of God.

Socio-Technical Humanity

But technology is not ultimate - Jesus left His workshop and Peter left his nets – to preach the gospel. Technology is a means not an end -and there are times when we have a good practical reason to leave the toolshed and go preach a sermon. The aim of the Christian life is the development of the human character in love, not the development of technology. Yet technology helps us express our love. If you love a sick person you want the best possible diagnosis and treatment. This may involve the development of X-Ray machines, MRI, better scalpels, or better disinfectants – all because we want to love, heal and help sick people. The technology takes the loving impulse and turns it into a practical reality. All the loving impulses in the world cannot make up for an inaccurate diagnosis, a blunt scalpel or an unhygienic ward. If love is to achieve its aims it needs to use technology to do so.

Thus technology is a means, not an end, technology is the means by which we express our love and incarnate it in the world of tangible things.

Thus we are socio-technical beings. That is we are social beings who express themselves through technology. This is no accident of culture or a sudden invention of the last few years. For, as we saw in Ezekiel, God Himself is a socio-technical being, a loving Trinity enthroned on an awesome chariot of fire.

The construction of the Temple gives us some idea of what Spirit-indwelt technology can look like. The Temple was the construction of human craftsmen inspired by God working to a construction plan given to David by the Holy Spirit (1 Chronicles 28:11-19). Here technology is clearly in the service of God for the glory of God and its result ends up being personally indwelt by God.

Many bible commentators have noticed that humanity starts in a Garden but ends up in a city – the city of God. Living in a city involves roads and buildings and communications. The city, the place of technology, is our final home because there we will use the technical skills given to us by God and be inventive, artistic and creative. We don't go back to a garden, we have outgrown Eden, we have now mastered fire and steel and music and art and we are socio-technical beings who will dwell in a socio-technical city indwelt by God. (Revelation chapters 21,22)

The Spirit Of The Living Beings Was In The Wheels

In the Ezekiel passage above it says "for the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels". This says two things - firstly that technology can be indwelt by God, or by other spiritual beings, and secondly that our "spirit" our culture can be expressed in our artifacts and technology.

God can "dwell" in a Temple. And our cultural spirit has its temples - shopping malls, B2 bombers, racing cars and skyscrapers. These technological constructions express the spirit of the nation or culture. From the Gogodala canoe race with its chanting and spells to the elegance of the Concorde we feel our technology captures our spirit and expresses it.

So what has happened to the spirit of a nation that builds too many malls or suddenly wants to build nuclear bombs? Or when a nation builds great skyscrapers and commercial buildings while its poor go without housing? Greed and violence have entered in and compassion has left. But the changes can be positive! In London after the great revivals pubs closed down, the slums were made attractive, and technical colleges and schools went up. When a revival affects construction work - then it has truly taken hold! And what does it say when we see a nation taking environmentalism to heart and building recycling plants and creating natural parks, museums and works of art? Our technology expresses both the best and the worst of our spirit.

Biblically there is one artifact of the spirit that keeps recurring - the ark!

The Ark: Technology and Salvation

Noah saved the world by building an ark. Technological skill in the construction of large vessels was needed and God gave a design to Noah which apparently is along the same proportions of the oil tankers of today (the ark would have carried around 50,000 tons).

Genesis 6:12-19 MKJV And God looked upon the earth. And, behold, it was corrupted! For all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth. (13) And God said to Noah, The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them. And, behold, I will destroy them *with* the earth. (14) Make an ark of cyprus timbers. You shall make rooms in the ark. And you shall pitch it inside and outside with pitch. (15) And this *is* the way you shall make it. The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it shall be fifty cubits and its height thirty cubits. (16) You shall make a window in the ark, and you shall finish it above to a cubit. And you shall set the door of the ark in the side of it. You shall make it with lower, second and third stories. (17) And behold! I, even I, am bringing a flood of waters upon the earth in order to destroy all flesh (in which *is* the breath of life) from under the heavens. Everything which *is* in

the earth shall die. (18) But I will establish My covenant with you. And you shall come into the ark, you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. (19) And you shall bring into the ark two of every *kind*, of every living thing of all flesh, to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female.

The "constructed ark" and salvation theme returns later in the ark that saved Moses: Exodus 2:3 MKJV But when she could no longer hide him, she took an ark of papyrus for him, and daubed it with bitumen and with pitch, and put the child in it. And she laid *it* in the reeds by the river's edge.

The ark is also the theme of the ornate "ark of the covenant" which was the centerpiece of the tabernacle. Exodus 25:10-13 MKJV And they shall make an ark *of* acacia-wood. Two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide and a cubit and a half high. (11) And you shall overlay it *with* pure gold. You shall overlay it inside and out, and shall make on it a crown of gold all around. (12) And you shall cast four rings of gold for it, and shall put *it* on its four feet. And two rings shall be in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it. (13) And you shall make staves *of* acacia-wood, and overlay them *with* gold.

This ark of the covenant was Spirit-indwelt power technology where God and man met. Exodus 25:22 MKJV And I will meet with you there, and I will talk with you from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubs on the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give you in commandment to the sons of Israel.

But the ark was also holy, powerful and dangerous: 2 Samuel 6:6-7 MKJV And when they came to Nachon's threshing-floor, Uzzah reached out to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen upset *it*. (7) And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Uzzah. And God struck him there for the error. And he died there by the ark of God.

Spirit-indwelt high-power technology is not to be taken lightly. The technology that saves can be the technology that kills. Yet technology is part of the salvation story, either in its perfection in the Ark of The Covenant or in its death and twisting in the Cross.

The Cross: The Death of Technology

The cross is the simplest possible construction – two straight sticks nailed together. The cross is inelegant, rough, crude, the very opposite of the artistry of the Ark of the Covenant. It's not efficient like a guillotine or merciful like a lethal injection. The cross is technology brutalized, technology used for cruelty, technology subverted and made primitive, ugly and dead. From the cruel whip of thongs the soldiers used, to the rod Jesus was beaten with to the crown of thorns - we see the technology of torture, brutality and cruelty. Technology in the hands of sadists in the service of Satan. Inventing instruments of torture and cruelty is the work of sick minds and it is the death of technology. God does not sit on His throne thinking about how best to torment people. In fact such cruelties do not enter His mind at all. Jeremiah 7:31 ASV And they have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded not, neither came it into my mind.

Technology employed for the purpose of cruelty is technology in the service of the Devil, not of God. Napalm, torture chambers, sweat-shops, inhuman working conditions, Satanic ritual abuse, death camps, the gas chambers in Auschwitz, and the Nazi experimentation on people are all demonic uses of technology. They are dark, evil, the perversion of human inventiveness and a twisting of the image of God.

Idols: The Worship Of The Wrong Spiritual Technology

Technology is also distorted from its God-given purpose when it is used for idolatry. Leviticus 26:1 ASV Ye shall make you no idols, neither shall ye rear you up a graven image, or a pillar, neither shall ye place any figured stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am Jehovah your God.

An idol is spirit-indwelt power technology of the wrong kind! Its technology indwelt by demons. 1 Corinthians 10:19-21 ASV (19) What say I then? that a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? (20) But *I say*, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have communion with demons. (21) Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons: ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and of the table of demons.

However powerful idolatry may be it is far less powerful than God as is illustrated by the clash between the Philistine idol Dagon and YHWH.: 1 Samuel 5:1-4 ASV Now the Philistines had taken the ark of God, and they brought it from Eben-ezer unto Ashdod. (2) And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon. (3) And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of Jehovah. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again. (4) And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of Jehovah; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands *lay* cut off upon the threshold; only *the stump of* Dagon was left to him.

When technology becomes clearly idolatrous God will humble it and cause it to fall down before Him. Then if it does not get the message it will be amputated!

Pressing the Pause Button: The Sabbath

Technology should not be not allowed to drive us relentlessly. There must be some sacred space in our culture. Days off, holy days, green belts, places of rest and recreation. There must be some areas beyond the intrusiveness of "work", the Market, and high speed 24/7 "always on" technological madness.

In the Bible both people and the land were to have Sabbaths. The people, once very seven days, the land once every seven years. During the Sabbath people were not to work or use technology - it was "tools down" time. During the Sabbath on the land it was not to feel then plow but rather it was to be left fallow.

Exodus 20:10-11 ASV but the seventh day is a sabbath unto Jehovah thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: (11) for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Leviticus 25:3-5 ASV Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruits thereof; (4) but in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath unto Jehovah: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard. (5) That which groweth of itself of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, and the grapes of thy undressed vine thou shalt not gather: it shall be a year of solemn rest for the land.

Six days we can use our technology - then we need to give ourselves and our environment a break. Even God rested from His creative labors on the seventh day. Part of being a socio-technical being is knowing when to let go of the need to work and to simply rest and enjoy relationships. We need to create Sabbath spaces when we, our culture and our technology "slow down" and our full humanity can be refreshed.

Technology Redeemed: The Technology of Worship

Music is the use of technology to produce harmony – whether it is a harp, a pipe organ or a computer that produces the sound. Skill with the instrument is an essential part of musical ability and of contributing to worship: 2 Chronicles 34:12 Darby (12) And the men did the work faithfully. And over them were appointed Jahath and Obadiah, Levites, of the children of Merari, and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the children of the Kohathites, for the oversight; and all these Levites were skilled in instruments of music.

The Psalms list large numbers of musical instruments used in worship such as harps, lyres, viols, drums, trumpets and cymbals (Psalm 150) and King David is credited with being an inventor of musical instruments. (Amos 6:5)

In worship the technology is secondary and the worship of the Lord is primary. Technology takes its place as a servant of the glory of God. In worship music the technology brings people together as one and unites them in thought and spirit. The musical instrument well played, in humble service to God is a key element in experiencing the presence of God. In worship we are socio-technical beings giving glory to God both in our social relationships and with our musical instruments. Similarly we are to integrate our modern worship technology - our sound systems, PowerPoint presentations, and lighting – into a seamless harmonious whole that gives glory to God and does not draw attention to the technology per se.

Technology And Evangelism

There has always been an adopting of technology by those interested in evangelism. The technology can be as simple as the printing of tracts and bibles or using a megaphone, as expensive as radio and TV evangelism or as far-reaching as satellite broadcasts and [cybermissions](#). The power is in the gospel, in the proclaimed word of God, not in the technology (Romans 1:16). However the technology allows the proclamation to reach more and more people and for it to be translated into languages and formats they understand – such as Braille. By teaching on the Internet I reach 4000 students a month- far more than I would teach in most bible colleges. Not only that but the web site is "teaching" them when I am asleep, traveling or even on holiday! Technology even enables me to teach people in over 25 countries simultaneously! Technology does not increase the truth of what I say or its power to save (which is Christ's alone) but it does make it cheaper and more accessible to those who seek it. It only costs me about $5 per year per full-time student at the AIBI! (www.aibi.ph).

Paul varied his missionary approach so that he might "by all means save some": *1 Corinthians 9:22 MKJV (22) To the weak I became as the weak, so that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men, so that I might by all means save some.* Thus the means adopted are to be tailored to those needing salvation – Braille bibles for the blind, hand-cranked tape players for remote rural villages, Internet chat rooms for the wired post-modern generation. The technology is only glorious if it is appropriate for getting those particular people saved and discipled.

Conclusion

We are socio-technical beings made in the image of God who are to use technology to love one another and carry out the Great Commission with wisdom and effectiveness. Technology can be Spirit-indwelt and powerful and an intrinsic part of the glory of God – such as the ark of the covenant or the wheels of Ezekiel. Technology is a means not an end and is not to be subverted into idolatry or used in inhuman and cruel ways. Neither is technology to be used to relentlessly drive us but rather is to be restrained by "Sabbath spaces' of rest that we create in the culture. Technology is to be harnessed for serving one another, for worship and as part of the expression of the spiritual wisdom of God as it is incarnate in the physical world. Spirit-filled Christians will be "skilled craftsmen" and technologically competent as well as of good Christian character. This wisdom will cause them to be able to dwell in the city of God, the perfect God-indwelt socio-technical community.

Can You Really Have an Internet Church?

Provocative Thoughts

- 50% of American Christians will worship solely online by 2010?? (Barna Research)
- Churches will go the way the same way as the retail shopping world. The local "mom and pop" general grocery store (local church) will be replaced by:
  Mega-churches (Big Box)
  House churches, ethnic churches, niche churches (Boutique / specialty stores)
  Cyberchurches (Internet commerce)

The Unchurched Church

- Many Christians are drifting around without regular participation in a local church
- Disillusioned – those burned by church
- Disabled – those physically unable to get there
- Disobedient – avoiding God
- Discarded – rejected by churches, unable to cope with large groups socially etc.
- Some of these actively seek fellowship online
- We need to help these people find a spiritual home where they can (online)
- Will this be adequate…?
- Can it help them at all?

Heresy!

- The Rev. Ian Paisley condemned Mel Gibson's "The Passion" saying: "the gospel should only be preached from the Bible, in a registered local church and by an ordained minister".
- Many people think that the gospel should be not be proclaimed online
- Cyberchurch is seen as a threat to "real church" which is seen as the neighborhood (parish) church alone.

The Cyberchurch is the Constant Church

- People do not leave the neighborhood church for a cyberchurch.
- People ADD the cyberchurch to their neighborhood church Christian experience.
- Then they move, or change churches, or fall ill and thus leave the parish church.
- The cyberchurch remains constant while the neighborhood church changes.
- CLF has been a "constant" in my life since 1995 – through three different countries and five different churches.

Part 1: The Nature of the Church in Cyberspace

What is a Church?

From Wayne Grudem "Systematic Theology", the Church is the community of all true believers for all time. (p.853)

We may conclude that the group of God's people considered at any level from local to universal may rightly be called a "church". We should not make the mistake of saying that only a church meeting in houses expresses the true nature of the church, or only a church meeting at a city-wide level can rightly be called a church, or only the church universal can rightly be called by the name "church". Rather the community of God's people meeting at any level can be rightly called a church. (p. 857)

What is an Online Community?

"Virtual communities are social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to forms webs of personal relationships in cyberspace. (Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community)* (revised ed.) p. xx

What is a Cyberchurch?

A church on the Internet emerges when a number of true Christian believers meet online in Christ's name, for long enough, and with sufficient human feeling, to forms webs of sanctified personal relationships in cyberspace that reflect the common presence of the Holy Spirit.

Emerges…

- Church arises out of real human connections.
- It is not identical to a particular web site, online forum or e-group.
- It takes time.
- It takes persistence in discussion.
- There needs to be "sufficient human feeling".
- There needs to be a sense of "in Christ's name".
- The group recognizes that "something has emerged" from their interactions.

A Called-Out Gathering

- The church is an ekklesia (a term originally used for a Greek democratic political assembly) which means "called out" as in "assembled by the call of the town crier".
- The church members are called out of the "world" (sinful areas of cyberspace?) into fellowship with one another.
- They are also specifically "gathered" around Christ.
- It is a sanctified gathering – dedicated to God, and separated from worldliness and idolatry.

But What About...

- Worship
- Baptism
- Communion
- The Laying On Of Hands
- Tithes and Offerings

- Healing & Exorcism
- Footwashing
- Hospitality
- Marriages
- Funerals

Degrees of Community

- The fullest expression of community was between Jesus and the Twelve and later in the Jerusalem Church (Acts 1-8).
- Since then the degree of genuine Christian community in the local church has varied greatly (almost from zero to infinity) but it has still been " the church".
- A good cyber-church should aim to also meet physically from time to time to enhance Christian community.
- Such meetings (perhaps quarterly) could share communion, have baptisms, etc.

Gathered...

- Is a person in the back row of a megachurch who comes and goes each week with no personal interaction with other Christians "gathered"?
- Is someone watching a TV evangelist "gathered" in community? [No – because they cannot interact with others]
- "Gathering" involves being able to practice some of the "one another" commands of the NT – love one another, encourage one another, etc.

Gathering In Cyberspace

Christians in an active online community can:

- Encourage one another.
- Exhort one another.
- Pray for one another.
- Edify one another.
- Teach one another.
- Rebuke one another.
- Love one another.
- Give to one another.

…And sometimes they do these things MORE often than in a face to face fellowship.

Cyber - Equivalents?

- Is a YouTube video of a sermon equivalent to listening to one "in church"?
- What about a written sermon?
- Is the Bible read online "the same as" the Bible read in Church?
- Can you have communion together online?
- Can you have Internet clergy?

In The Beginning Was the Word

Salvation is via an encounter with the Living Word of God, in Christ, in His Scriptures, and through the Holy Spirit, or, through the prophets. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, not our personalities, systems, or even our technology.

The Location Of The Word

- Jesus showed that the Word could encountered outside of the Temple, outside of the priestly hierarchy and outside of the social boundaries of Judaism.
- Jesus showed the Word was active and living among ordinary people in fishing boats, weddings, mountainsides, and the wilderness, even in homes of tax-collectors, and among lepers, demoniacs, Samaritans and Syrophoenicians.

The Word in Cyberspace

- So God's Word can be living and active in cyberspace.
- Salvation can and does occur in cyberspace.
- The Internet liberates God's Word to act outside of normal ecclesiastical structures.
- Thus the Internet may produce non-conventional forms of Church.
- The Internet allows God's Word to reach many people who would never encounter it by normal means.
- Prayerful Internet ministry brings about encounters between religious surfers and the living, active Word of God.
- This is more than just sharing Bible verses.

The Seeker and The Word

- People searching for religious information will often start by entering a query in the search engine.
- The search engine connects the religious seeker with information that promises to answer exactly that query.
- So when someone arrives at a Christian website they are expecting an answer to their query that they typed in the search engine.
- It is at this point that we must help them to encounter Christ the Living Word.
- The web is designed to assist people seeking information – including religious information and we must be there for these people!

The Word Forms Community

- The early Christian communities were the result of apostolic preaching.
- The Church is formed by the Word.
- Online communities form around a certain specialized 'message' – whether it be Star Trek fans or computer security geeks.
- To form community we need to have a clear declared message.

Communities Form Beliefs

Most of our beliefs are formed in us by the communities that we belong to:

- Family
- School
- Church
- University
- Military
- Seminary
- Political Party

Cyberchurches are places of shared stories, ideas and the formation of Christian beliefs.

Emerging From The Word

Cyber-churches need to be online spiritual communities which emerge out of living encounters with God's Word online and which are centered around a gospel which is the power of God unto salvation.

Liberated In Order To Emerge

God has liberated the gospel in cyberspace so that it might create new communities of faith which will emerge from the gospel's proclamation outside of the normal ecclesiastical structures and channels.

Communities vs. Converts

- In Acts we see the apostles creating new communities of faith and appointing leaders for them.
- The gospel creates communities of faith, not just individual converts.
- We need to BOTH.
  a) Get people saved online.
  b) Form them into living, active, Spirit-filled cyber-communities of grace.

Cyberchurch to Neighborhood Church

- Can people converted online be channeled into local neighborhood churches?
- Not a matter of "either/or" but rather is "both/and".
- People can belong to both a cyberchurch and a neighborhood church.
- Churches need to have websites that appeal to those seeking a neighborhood church experience

Web-Enabled House Churches

- House churches linked to a central website that provides teaching material, resources, discussion forums, etc.
- House church members can contribute to the website.
- Enables house churches to benefit from a wider range of gifted people.
- Intimacy of wide-ranging theological discussion online.
- Intimacy of worship and personal ministry in house churches.

Part 2: Cyberchurches – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Strength – Specialization

- The Internet allows geographically dispersed specialists to consult with one another.
- Communities can be built around a single narrow topic e.g. Missionary work in a certain UPG (unreached people group).
- Cyberchurches can cater to specialized and neglected cultural and sub-cultural groups e.g. Filipinos working overseas, or people with a certain disability.

Strength - Lack of Forms

- People enjoy cyberchurch because they do not have to dress a certain way or act a certain way.
- People are not judged by how they look but by how they interact with others.
- Age, race and gender issues are far less prominent.

Strength – A synchronicity

- You do not have to meet all at the same time and in the same place.
- Shift workers can answer their emails when it suits them.
- People can take time to think about an answer or response.
- Church is "always on".

Strength – Anonymity / Security

- It is much easier to arrest a group meeting in a building than to round up twenty people known only as joe1234@yahoo.com.
- While the Internet is never perfectly secure, it is more secure than practically any other alternative.
- China, North Korea, and Saudi Arabia may be exceptions to this rule.

Strength – Seeker Driven

- Because most people who will arrive at your cyberchurch website will get there through a search engine they will be already somewhat interested.
- Thus you can tailor a cyberchurch to a very specific interest and rely on search engines to bring you people who seek that specific thing.
- In fact the more unique and specific you are, in general, the more visitors you will receive.
- When this works it produces homogeneous groups of interested and motivated people.

Strength - Good Content

- A cyberchurch can have an enormous amount of high quality content available in articles, podcasts and videos.
- Content can be created by all members not just a single minister.
- People can access high quality content outside of "Sunday morning and Wednesday night".

- The content can be discussed all week long.

Weaknesses – Lack of Commitment

- Few people are as committed to life in a cyberchurch as they are to life in a neighbourhood church.
- At this point the cyberchurch is still "virtual" and is "not really real" for most people.

Weakness – The Word Is Not Made Flesh

- "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us..full of grace and truth..."
- This "word made flesh" aspect does not happen in a pure virtual cyberchurch. No one hugs you, anoints you with oil, baptizes you, or lays hands upon you in prayer.

Weakness – Lack of Accountability

- Cyberchurches cannot hold members accountable for their lifestyles.
- There are few mechanisms for effective church discipline.
- Cyber-Christians can effectively hide sinful and embarrassing parts of their lives from others.
- Accountability can be very helpful to Christian growth and is generally absent in cyberspace.

Weakness – Corporate Worship

- Cyberchurches lack the corporate worship experience, sitting at the computer listening to an MP3 it is not quite the same as singing "How Great Thou Art" with hundreds of other believers!

Dealing with the Weaknesses

- Cyberchurches can hold quarterly "gatherings" or arrange neighborhood cell groups / house churches to bring the incarnational, personal, "one another" elements of the Christian faith.
- Cyberchurches can encourage people to become prayer partners by phone / Skype to encourage sharing and accountability.

Opportunities: Mission

- A cyberchurch can reach out to people in many countries of the world, sharing the gospel in a peer-to-peer manner without the encumbrance of having to get air tickets, visas, worry about diseases and security etc.
- A cyber-ministry can reach places closed to more traditional forms of mission.
- Can disciple people who otherwise could not be discipled: Muslim nations, remote areas, shut-ins, introverts, skeptics, etc.

Opportunities: Seniors

- Those seniors who do use the Internet tend to spend more hours in cyberspace than anyone else - over twice the time of young people who "dive in and dive out".

- Many of these seniors do not have good health and do not enjoy going to a neighborhood church but have much wisdom and love the Lord.

Opportunities: The Unchurched Church

- Many Christians have left the institutional church – for a wide variety of reasons and now "float around" seeking spiritual nourishment here and there.
- Unchurched Christians can benefit greatly from a friendly and accepting cyberchurch which can help them to rebuild their trust in the Christian community.

Opportunities: Micro-Churches

- The Internet can draw together small groups of people around very specific doctrinal or practical interests.
- You could set up an Internet church for HIV+ people, or for folk with a hearing disability.

Opportunities: Social Networking

- Christian social networking
- Christian alternatives to MySpace
- Bringing friends together to meet Christ and enter into salvation together
- www.boc.org
- www.mypraize.com
- www.mybattlecry.com
- www.storyspot.com
- www.meetfish.com

Opportunities: New Technologies

- Podcasting
- Videocasting
- Cell phones
- Ebooks / Downloads
- Injecting web based content into normal Christian community

Opportunities: Web to Local

- Databases of local churches "Find A Church"
- Google local – church plus zip code
- Connect web communities to neighborhood churches that respect that paradigm
- Church based face to face events for web communities

Opportunities: Game Communities

- Game communities - meet in the game, then form into Christian community
- Christian gaming communities
- Christian sub-communities in Second Life etc
- Use the game to teach values – teaching by participation

Threats: Technological

- A cyberchurch depends on reliable Internet access and people having computers to access it. If the server goes down, the church goes down.
- A cyberchurch can be hacked or spied on by malicious parties
- Some high-bandwidth applications (e.g video streaming) may not be accessible to members using dialup or in developing nations.
- VOIP e.g. Skype is illegal in some countries Threats - Fakes, Impostors and Heretics
- Fakes / Infiltrators: It can be difficult to ascertain that someone is "really a Christian" online? (This is vital in Muslim countries)
- Impostors: For instance someone who claims to be one gender but is really another e.g. a man pretending to be a woman?
- Heretics / Cults: Those who enter the group to argue or to "draw away disciples after themselves"

Threats: Scam Artists & Online Predators

- People who enter Christian groups because they are "so trusting" and peddle multi-level marketing, HYIPs (High Yield Investment Portfolios = Ponzi schemes) etc.
- People who try to ensnare youth, lonely people etc into sexual relationships
- Teach discernment skills
- Have an alert moderator

Threats: Internal and External Conflict

- If moderation is too laissez-faire then internal conflict can tear the cyberchurch apart
- If moderation is too strict, many people will quietly (and sometimes loudly) leave
- Cyberchurches have the potential to cause resentment from other forms of ministry and can thus generate external conflict
- Cyberchurches can occasionally be accused of the same sorts of things that social networking sites are accused of
- Have a clear, written code of conduct
- Have a usage policy and copyright policy
- Have fair and firm moderation

Part 3: Building Christian Community Online

Focus

- An online community needs a central focus e.g. "Red Hat Linux User Group", or "Christian Bee-Keepers Association of Northern Alberta".
- The site policy document should reflect this focus and help people to stick within it
- For instance a Christian HIV+ recovery group may wish to include some people and exclude others and this should be plainly stated at sign-up.

Forty to Four Hundred

- 40 is the "magic number" of members at which an online community starts to "come alive".
- 400 members is approximately the number at which an online community begins to get too many messages and becomes "too large" for most people.
- Try and get 40 interested folk (or as close to it as possible) before you start your cyberchurch, divide the community at 400 or earlier.

Facilitated

- Keep it simple and intuitive, write for outsiders not insiders, remember the non-techie.
- Have help that is easy to access. Reminder emails each month.
- If people are made to feel dumb they will stop participating.
- If people are made to feel clever and cool they will tell others.
- If people feel they are helped quickly they will be loyal.
- If their problems are ignored they will resent you.

Faith

- A cyberchurch that is spiritually encouraging and full of faith will grow through the work of the Holy Spirit among its members
- Encourage positive Scriptural faith and simple Christian joy
- Use scriptures to encourage people and assure people that they are being prayed for

Fervent Prayer

- All ministry rises or falls on prayer – even cyberministry.
- There is an enormous amount of spiritual warfare that happens in online ministry .especially those that are breaking into territory once held by Satan.
- Pray daily for your online ministry and have it "covered" by some good intercessors.
- Have a separate e-group of prayer partners and send them weekly updates.

Fast & Friendly

- Fast responses from a friendly moderator really help to build online community.
- If a moderator can respond within 2-3 hours of most messages being posted it gives a sense of immediacy which encourages sharing.
- Moderators should aim to "prime the pump" rather than dominate the discussion.

Fairness

- The moderation team (and it is best if it is a team of say 3-5 mature Christians) should be scrupulously fair when dealing with online disputes.
- Cliques and favorites can develop online, just as they do offline and they are perhaps even more damaging.
- Impartiality brings stability to online community.

Fire Extinguishers!

- "Flames" are insults, aspersions and verbal assaults which occur in online debates.
- If the "flames" are allowed to spread then the Christian community can be damaged
- It can be tempting to react angrily to someone who "flames" you – which only adds fuel to the fire.
- The goal is not to "win" but to preserve community.
- Forbearance and turning the other cheek are essential.
- Moderators should privately email those in the flame war and tell them to stop.

Freebies

- People will join an online community that has regular freebies – that relate to the group's purpose.
- This can be as simple as a link to a useful piece of free software or to a bible search tool or other item: "This week's useful freebie: check out E-Sword's new module on..."
- Or it can be a "free tip" on Christian living or a free devotional.
- Once they join they then can slowly become part of the other activities of the cyberchurch.

Fine Folk

- People want to be around "fine folk who are just like them".
- This is the homogenous unit principle of Donald McGavran.
- People do not want to have to cross cultural, linguistic or social barriers to receive the gospel.
- Since an online community can only contain about 400 people out of all Creation it can legitimately be limited to a certain demographic.

Features

- Have enough site features to encourage folk to participate in ways that suit them e.g discussion boards, e-groups, instant messenger, photo gallery, notices, downloads, sermons, prayer whiteboard etc.
- Do not have so many features that they are underutilized and the site seems dead.
- Add features by member demand, e.g. live chat is only suitable for very large groups.

Few Irritants

If a cyberchurch is full of irritants such as:
- Spam,
- Multi-level marketing
- Large attachments
- Flashing gifs
- Blatant advertising
- Financial appeals and
- "Pass-it-on" emails

Then people will reach a certain limit of patience and either unsubscribe or cease participating in other ways.

Finesse

- The most long-lived communities such as The Well have a certain "finesse" about them.
- Develop a sense of poise and power and maintain it.
- Don't be thrown by quiet spots or by a few members leaving.
- Communicate a dynamic sense of "why you are there".

Follies (To Avoid)

- False intimacy / rushing to commitment/ "gushiness".
- Intolerance of legitimate diversity.
- Expecting too much, too soon from the cyberchurch.
- Asking people to "do stuff" or to give financially before they are ready to do so.

Part 4: Free Or Low Cost Software For Building Christian Communities Online

Content Management Systems

- E107
- Drupal
- CivicSpace
- Are database driven content management systems using PHP/MySql and generally running on Linux/Apache servers.
- They have forums, blogs, email to members and many other features.
- They take some configuration but it is now getting much easier to install and configure them.
- Try them out at: http://www.opensourcecms.com/.
- Compare them at: http://www.cmsmatrix.org/.

Forums

- Simple Machines Forum
- http://www.simplemachines.org/
- Do NOT use PHPBB as it has serious security issues.
- It is wise NOT to turn on HTML for posts (with most forum software)
- Have clear forum rules.
- Check the forum each day to ensure that inappropriate material is not being posted.

Blogs

- Blog is the contraction universally used for weblog, a type of website where entries are made (such as in a journal or diary), displayed in a reverse chronological order.
- A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic. Some focus on photographs (photoblog), videos (vlog), or audio (podcasting), and are part of a wider network of social media.

- Programs: WordPress, MovableType, Greymatter, Typepad
- Hosted Blogs: Blogger, Xanga, LiveJournal.
- About.com list of free blog software and blog hosts.

Dealing With "Blogspam"

- "Blogspam" has become so common that it is making running a hosted blog (e.g. a Wordpress blog) very difficult.
- If you do run a blog then run some "spam karma" software to catch comment spam and trackback spam.
- Wikipedia has a good article on defeating spam in blogs: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spam_in _blogs

IM, VOIP & Internet radio

- Scatterchat – secure IM client based on GAIM compatible with AOL, YM, ICQ etc. http://www.scatterchat.com/
- Skype: www.skype.com
- PalTalk: http://www.paltalk.com/

How to set up an Internet radio station:

- About.Com article
- WinAmp article
- Microsoft article

Education

- Moodle - www.moodle.org
- Interact – hosted at Sourceforge http://sourceforge.net/projects/cce-interact
- Spaghetti Learning: www.spaghtettilearning.com
- UNESCO- Free and Open Software Portal - Courseware

General Software

- Sourceforge - www.sourceforge.net Open source software repository
- PHP Resource Index http://php.resourceindex.com/ Add functionality to your website
- 46 Best Freeware Utilities www.techsupportalert.com/best_46_free_utilities.htm
- CSS Play: http://www.cssplay.co.uk/menus/ CSS style sheets so you can look cool!

Christian Stuff

- E—Sword: www.e-sword.net
- Net Bible: http://www.bible.org/ Bible with extensive study notes
- Bible Gateway http://www.biblegateway.com/
- Ebible (World English Bible) http://www.ebible.org/
- Thom Tapp – Christian cartoons http://www.thomtapp.com/

The Need for Cybermissions Partnership

At the moment cybermissions tends to be done by a few visionary organizations and individuals with some cross-pollination through online forums. There is much re-inventing of the wheel and struggling with finances and to some extent with technology. There are also a lot of websites build and abandoned by those who tried and failed. There is a need for more nurturing structures, for validation, encouragement and sharing of ideas, technologies and resources.

At the moment there is networking through groups such as the Internet Evangelism Coalition, IEC Global Forum, ICCM, ICTA-AU, MAF-XC , AC4 and Cybermissions.Org. People are gradually coming in contact and sharing ideas and opinions, and that is good. However these groups (while they are very valuable) do not construct strategic plans, make agreements or share resources. For that to happen true partnerships are needed.

Partnerships are relatively permanent structures that have a focus in a mutually agreed group task or objective. They often have a partnership agreement and a loose committee of some sort. The individual agencies agree to pursue the partnership objectives and yet each defines the amount that they are willing to contribute towards the process. (The principles of partnership exploration, formation and operation can be found at http://www.interdev.org)

4 Kinds

I foresee four kinds of partnerships that will arise to address these needs:

1. National partnerships of cybermissions agencies in say Malaysia, Australia or Canada along the lines of and perhaps within the auspices of organizations like the Evangelical Alliance.

2. People group specific partnerships where the cybermissionaries trying to target a groups such as post-modern Americans, Thai Buddhists or Iranian Muslims combine resources and develop a strategic plan to which they all work. (InterDev style for those familiar with this model)

3. City-wide partnerships where the churches in a city combine to use the Internet strategically to network among each other and to reach groups within the city such as students and young people. A city-church website could even be developed such as "where to go to church in Tuscaloosa" with links to all the local church websites.

4. Technology and task-based partnerships which could be focused around a specific aspect of cybermissions such as Christian graphic artists, computer techs, Linux buffs and security gurus and could work on a project such as developing a particular piece of software.

Each of these four kinds of partnerships has a quite different dynamic suited for their different objectives. National partnerships might have an annual conference as the main partnership dynamic and emerge with a national strategic plan and set of standards. UPG cybermission partnerships might seldom meet face to face but would share knowledge, translation facilities and perhaps organize a joint short-term missions trip to the area. City-wide partnerships could meet bi-monthly and have pizza. Technology based partnership might be focused around a

SlashDot/SourceForge like forum that brings code snippets and comments together in an asynchronous fashion. And each of these types of partnerships are needed if we are to do the task effectively, it's not either/or but all four!

Forming and Finding Partnerships

Firstly, a partnership may already exist. A few times I have gone to form a partnership to find that there was one already operating! If there is one and it's functional – then join in and help. Do a thorough Internet search and ask around a bit before deciding to start a cybermissions partnership.

Secondly, don't try and start with "everyone". Let people hang around the edges for a while as they check you out and ask questions. Some may never join - that's Ok too. Just move with the movers.

Thirdly – focus on the things, which unite, such as Jesus, the Great Commission, the vision, the need, and the technology and not on things that divide such as pet doctrines and personal opinions.

Fourthly, decide on your limits of inclusion (for the partnership) before you start and stick to them. My personal limits of inclusion are "bible-believing, born-again Trinitarian Christians". Anywhere along that spectrum for evangelical to Pentecostal is fine with me but I don't want to work with skeptical liberals or with people that are not born-again. For me that is being unequally yoked and when I have tried it – it has never worked.

Fifthly, decide on the type of partnership you wish to form and its crystal clear purpose. People find it hard to join a vague notion. And partnership for partnership sake nearly always fails.

Sixthly, read the material InterDev has developed on partnership formation (www.Interdev.org) and learn as much as you can about them.

Seventhly, pray without ceasing for blessing, unity, discernment and wisdom.

This inevitable leads to another question – how can we motivate people to get involved?

Fifteen Ways To Motivate People To Engage in Cybermissions

1. Create a climate of permission - make it permissible to engage in Internet missions and validate it as "real ministry".

2. Tell stories of success, salvation and transformation.

3. Show the needs, the opportunities and the possibilities and how cybermissions can meet them.

4. Reassure people they are unlikely to be hacked, spied on or threatened by "online monsters".

5. Start small. Show that a highly effective, low cost, low risk cyber-ministry can even be done from home.

6. Get pastors on board by using phrases such "How a local church can have a global outreach through cybermissions."

7. Read the following article about local churches and cybermissions: http://www.cybermissions.org/articles/localchurch.htm

8. Tie the cybermissions emphasis in with existing missions emphasis for instance if the church has Thai Buddhists as a target group then show how they can learn about, meet and witness to Thai Buddhists online.

9. Create a small group of prayed up, fired up visionaries. Work mainly with businessmen and other energetic positive folk. Flow around the obstacles. Just ignore the critics and work with the people who have caught the vision.

10. Give participants a meaningful role according to their gifting. (Don't hog all the good bits)

11. Don't try to "own" people or groups or the area of cybermissions. Don't hit people with strict rules and high demands and expectations. Give away control and give away the glory. Let people feel free to contribute on their own terms.

12. Honor first efforts. Many "newbie" church websites are easy to pick apart and criticize. Remember that we were all once "newbies" and proud of our animated gifs. Honor these efforts and gently nudge them towards better strategies and design. Sharp criticism early on is discouraging and if you engage in it you will lose such folk and all that they could have developed into.

13. Create community, have fun, let people enjoy the experience. Don't be too serious!

14. Keep Christ central. Unity around Christ is far more binding and powerful than unity around "missions", a UPG or a technology.

15. Soak the whole deal in prayer and let God the Holy Spirit do the deep work in their hearts and minds.

Final Thoughts

Unless we form focused, task-oriented cybermissions partnerships we will all die from caffeine poisoning and pizza overdoses in front of our PC's and Macs. Cybermissions is tough exhausting work and there has to be a smart way to spread the load, to avoid duplication and to use our various giftings. Partnership is the obvious answer but the Devil will fight tooth and nail to stop such partnerships forming and to render them ineffective. We need to come to the Lord of the Harvest in prayer and ask for laborers – and especially for co-laborers who can work together, in unity to do the work of God.

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Techno-Spiritual Quotes

Collected By Jeremy S. Gluck (from Cybersoc.com)

Jeremy S Gluck <jeremy.gluck@dial.pipex.com> is the founder of Spiritech UK, an association that strongly believes not only the function of technology as a mirror of human consciousness but in the eventual unfolding of an original machine consciousness that will be a partner to humankind. At our request, he selected a number of thoughtful quotes concerning the relation between technology and spirituality. Michel Bauwens

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"There is no answer outside the human being. The machine's hidden agenda turns out to be our own agenda...There is no capability of the computer that can't be made to look good in one light and bad in another. Which light should we choose? Only the light -- and the darkness -- emanating from the human heart. At the end of the twentieth century it scarcely seems possible to stand in this light and this darkness without worrying deeply about the terms of our inner pact with the computer." - Stephen L. Talbott (Author of 'The Future Does not Compute")

*****

"I do believe we are in the midst of a transition - intimated by the Internet - towards a more collective thinking, where the individual psyche becomes a component of a larger group mind. "This doesn't mean we stop existing as individuals, but it could mean we become more fully aware of every other living being, much in the way a coral reef's individual organisms respond to one another as if they were part of the same, single body." - Douglas Rushkoff (Author of 'Cyberia')

*****

"Technology is part of nature. It's an extension of human consciousness. Ironically the portals that technology opens to us are generally portals that we could open without technology, if we knew how. I think that we are fully capable as human beings of having a global brain and of communicating with each other as parts of a single great organism. But either we really haven't developed those skills, or else we've lost the ability to use them. Back in tribal days, people didn't see themselves as individuals; they saw themselves as parts of a little organism. Well, being one part of an eight-billion part organism is much harder to come to grips with. In a way, technology is a test run." - Douglas Rushkoff

*****

"Late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines. Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert." -- Donna Haraway (Author of 'The Cyborg Manifesto')

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"(David) Chalmers thinks it quite possible that AI research may someday generate-- may now be generating--new spheres of consciousness unsensed by the rest of us. Strange as it may seem, the prospect that we are creating a new species of sentient life is now being taken seriously in philosophy.

"Though (Alan) Turing generally shied away from such metaphysical questions, his 1950 paper did touch briefly on this issue. Some people, he noted, might complain that to create true thinking machines would be to create souls, and thus exercise powers reserved for God. Turing disagreed. "In attempting to construct such machines we should not be irreverently usurping his power of creating souls, any more than we are in the procreation of children," Turing wrote. "Rather we are, in either case, instruments of his will providing mansions for the souls that he creates."

Robert Wright (journalist at Time Magazine)

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"My view is...that some machines are already potentially more conscious than are people, and that further enhancements would be relatively easy to make..." - Marvin Minsky (the father of Artificial Intelligence)

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"I no longer worry about dying, but I do worry about dying before my computer is proud of me. In the future there will be man, woman, and machine. Three slightly or grossly - different ways of thinking. Carbon life with its emotion, uncertainty and analogue processes complemented by the far more deterministic and precise machine. The machine will be able to conceptualize the future by running incredibly complex models to predict the outcome of any action or decision. It's the ultimate mix = analogue + digital, random + chaotic, intuition + modeling. Perhaps my computer will envy me my imagination and intuition." - Peter Cochrane (head of British Telecom's Multimedia research division)